

A Turbulent Decade

**Social Protest Movements and the
Labour Movement, 1965-1975**

**Edited by
Beverley Symons and Rowan Cahill**

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**Published by Sydney Branch,
Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 2005
PO Box 1027, Newtown,
Sydney, 2042**

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National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry

A turbulent decade : social protest movements and the
labour movement, 1965-1975.

ISBN 0 909944 09 1.

1. Labor movement - Australia - History - 20th century. 2.
Social change - Australia - History - 20th century. 3.
Australia - Social conditions - 20th century. I. Symons,
Beverley. II. Cahill, Rowan J., 1945- . III. Australian
Society for the Study of Labour History. Sydney Branch.

331.80994

Layout: Southland Media Pty Ltd
Printing: Southwood Press, Marrickville

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction: Rowan Cahill	v
Conference Opening Comments: Greg Patmore	1
Chapter 1: The Anti-Vietnam War and Anti-Conscription Movements:	
Mavis Robertson	2
Bob Gould	6
Jack Cambourn	8
Charlie Bowers	9
Noreen Hewett	11
Chapter 2: The Student, New Left and Counter-Culture Movements:	
Anthony Ashbolt	15
Greg Mallory	18
Rowan Cahill	21
John Percy	22
Wendy Bacon	23
Hall Greenland	25
Gillian Leahy	26
Panel Discussion	27
Chapter 3: Sexual Politics: The Women's Liberation Movement:	
Suzanne Bellamy	30
Joyce Stevens	32
Lyndall Ryan	35
Chapter 4: Sexual Politics: Gay and Lesbian Rights:	
Craig Johnston	38
Robyn Plaister	39
Sue Wills	41
Ken Davis	43
Shane Ostenfeld	46
Chapter 5: Aboriginal Land Rights and Civil Rights:	
Brian Aarons	50
Dulcie Flower	51
Lester Bostock	55

Chapter 6: The Anti-Apartheid Movement:

Audrey McDonald	58
Meredith Burgmann	59
Peter McGregor.....	61
John Myrtle	64

Chapter 7: The Trade Union Movement: Changes, Struggles and Gains:

Diane Fieldes.....	67
Paul True	70
Jack Munday	71
Tom McDonald.....	74
Joe Palmada.....	77
Barrie Unsworth.....	79

Chapter 8: Conflict and Change in the Australian Labor Party, 1965-1972:

Sue Tracey	82
Bruce Childs	83
Graham Freudenberg	86
Suzanne Jamieson.....	89
Race Mathews.....	92

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the weekend of September 22-23, 2001, the Sydney Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (ASSLH) conducted a Conference entitled 'Social Protest Movements and the Labour Movement, 1965-1975'. The papers and talks presented there form the basis of this book.

The Conference was organised by the following members of the Sydney Branch committee of the ASSLH: Rowan Cahill, Bob Gould, Julie Kimber, Greg Patmore, John Shields, Beverley Symons and Margaret Walters.

The editors thank Beverley Symons for undertaking the task of transcribing and editing the Conference proceedings, the SEARCH Foundation for a small grant to assist with financing this task, and the Conference participants who gave permission for their contributions to be published here.

INTRODUCTION

The Conference, 'Social Protest Movements and the Labour Movement, 1965-1975', was held in Sydney on September 22-23, 2001. It took place eleven days after Muslim militants crashed hijacked airliners into the World Trade Centre in New York and into the Pentagon, and nine days after the Australian government, in consultation with the United States government, invoked relevant provisions of the ANZUS treaty equating an attack on the US as an attack on Australia's peace and safety. Australia was heading for military involvement in a war against the hapless, impoverished nation of Afghanistan – a war that US President George W. Bush ominously termed 'the first war of the twenty-first century', as he pointed the finger at Islamic militant Osama bin Laden and made war against terrorism the focus of his Administration.

Racism and hysteria gained ground in Australia. A spirit similar to Cold War McCarthyism gripped the nation; criticism of the US and its conduct in world affairs was deemed tantamount to siding with terrorism, in the same way during the 1950s and 1960s, that criticism of the US was deemed to equate with communism. Anti-Muslim graffiti appeared on the walls of Mosques and Islamic schools in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane; arson attacks were to follow. Australian Muslims, particularly women and children, were verbally and physically assaulted; radio talk-back programs enthusiastically aired anti-Muslim sentiments.

For many Conference participants it was a time for sober reflection. The hysteria, fear and ignorance that characterised public discourse and reaction since September 11 was reminiscent of Cold War Australia, when truth was hard to find, information was not freely disseminated, and informed discourse was discouraged. The social protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s had their roots in opposition to these sorts of social and political forces and to the type of culture they engendered.

The Conference was framed around, and between, two landmark years in Australian history. In 1965 the Liberal-Country Party coalition government of Sir Robert Menzies committed a battalion of troops to the war in Vietnam, dramatically increasing Australia's involvement which had until then been limited to military advisers. (The initial involvement, beginning in 1962, consisted of thirty advisers). In 1975 Malcolm Fraser successfully challenged for the Liberal Party leadership and went on to orchestrate the dismissal of the reformist Whitlam Labor government. Labor had come to power in 1972 after 23 years in Opposition, the political and cultural radicalism of the 1960s and early '70s acting as its political midwife.¹

Between 1965 and 1975 Australia changed dramatically and significantly, warranting description as a 'cultural revolution' by the education historian, Alan Barcan.² As social historian, Donald Horne, has pointed out, for most of the twentieth-century 'the prevailing culture in Australia included racist, anglocentric-imperialist, puritan, sexist, politically genteel acquiescent, capitalist, bureaucratic and developmentalist strains.'³ It was during the period 1965-1975 that the skids were put under this 'prevailing culture', with much of the challenge and impetus for change coming from social protest

movements subscribing to an interpretation of democracy at odds with the prevailing understanding that 'democracy depended on quiescence among the citizens'.⁴

The period seeded the future with movements and ideas that challenged and changed Australian society and culture as women, aborigines, gays, lesbians and environmentalists variously articulated, demanded, claimed, struggled and gained attention and rights previously denied. Perhaps its greatest legacy was in striking an almighty blow for the legitimisation of protest in this country, 'enlarging the space for democratic action'.⁵

Not that a desire and propensity for change did not exist prior to 1965. It did. As Mark Davis has pointed out, a mood for change built during the final years of the Menzies government, 'an urgent sense that a shift was needed in social and administrative priorities'. This mood found expression, for example, in books like Robin Boyd's *Australian Ugliness* (1960), Peter Coleman's edited collection *Australian Civilization* (1962) and his *Obscenity, Blasphemy, Sedition: Censorship in Australia* (1962), and Donald Horne's iconic best-seller *The Lucky Country* (1964).⁶ But the prevailing culture remained intact, to the extent that during the 1950s and early '60s there was a steady exit of creative youthful talent to cultural Meccas overseas, seeking liberation from being hemmed in and stultified by the 'sanctimonious Australia of Robert Gordon Menzies'.⁷

What set the ball of protest and change irrevocably rolling were the events of 1965 - the linkage by the Menzies government of conscription with service overseas, and the increased military commitment to the Vietnam War. The first conscript to be killed in the conflict was Errol Noack, tuna fisherman and factory worker, who died in hospital on 24 May 1966, ten days after arriving in Vietnam. He had been hit in the stomach by a burst of machine-gun fire whilst on patrol in Bien Hoa province.⁸

The commitment of a battalion almost immediately generated protests, coming as it did the day after the Defence Act was amended to allow conscripts to be deployed overseas for combat service, ending the use of conscripts solely for home defence enshrined in legislation since 1903.

Conscription, or 'National Service' as it was euphemistically known in Australia, had been introduced in 1964 without public debate, as a *fait accompli*. Beginning in January 1965, twenty-year old men (in reality 'boys' because the right to vote and adult status were not attained until reaching the age of twenty-one) were selectively conscripted for two years of full-time military service by a birthday lottery-ballot system.

There was a long, divisive, Australian tradition of compulsory military service, with various schemes in place from 1911 to 1929, 1939 to 1945, and 1951 to 1960. Each of these generated wide ranging resistance, from the personal to the organised. The first period initially involved 'boy conscription', targeting all fit males between the ages of 12 and 26. Official, probably conservative, figures show that during the period from the scheme's introduction to the end of June 1915, there were 27,749 prosecutions and at least 7093 imprisonments for resistance to the scheme.⁹ Two attempts to introduce conscription for overseas service during World War 1 polarised the nation, at times violently so, and were rejected by the Australian people when put to referendums.

Initially, anti-Vietnam War and anti-conscription activity tended to be quietist and educational in the sense that the preferred mode of struggle took the form of Letters to the Editor, petitions, small peaceful demonstrations, educative public meetings with guest speakers and the possibility of generating media coverage of dissident opinion, and the circulation of literature contesting government policies.

As Australia's involvement in the War intensified, opposition grew and also intensified. Protest action increasingly became confrontational and disruptive, the new mood signalled by a demonstration involving the blocking of Pitt Street, Sydney, during peak hour on the evening of 22 October 1965.¹⁰

The War brought into existence a mushroom growth of anti-war, protest groups and organisations, often obtrusive in that their style and tactics demanded and gained public and political attention, to the extent that in 1969 Federal Cabinet considered draconian legislation to curb free speech, the right of assembly, and anti-war protest.¹¹ However, the first protests against the War came from long established political organisations and from activists with radical track records and/or family links to a dissenting/oppositional past, and from an established peace movement with a history, tradition, and organisational links that can be traced back to the small groups that formed during the early twentieth-century to oppose Australian and British involvement in the Boer War.¹²

The point is that the period 1965 to 1975, with all its drama, colour and sense of the New, was not unconnected with the Australian past - a connection evident in many of the proceedings of the Conference. This point is at odds with the dismissive conservative tendency to portray the radicalism of the 1960s and 1970s as divorced from Australian history, with the protest and ideas of the period being derivative and imitative of what was happening overseas, instead of being rooted in Australian political events, culture and tradition.

As Barry York has observed in regard to student radicalism during the 1960s and early 1970s:

it is a pity that the near-obsession of most commentators with the 'derived' nature of the Australian student movement has blinded them to the centrally-important political catalyst within Australia. We read so often of Australian students responding to the May rebellion in Paris, France. Yet the abundance of evidence points more in the direction of Canberra; for it was there that amendments to the National Service Act (including a clause obligating the 'principal officers of educational institutions' to supply information about their students) were being debated. And it was these amendments which marked the turning-point in campus activism within Australia.¹³

Segmentation of the past into manageable units, decades as in 'the fifties', 'the sixties', 'the seventies', or into eras as in 'the decade of dissent' or 'the protest era' (circa 1965-1975) is useful, facilitating the close study of specific chunks of time isolated from the complexities of the entire past. However, isolation can also separate segments from the past to the extent that connections and relationships with what has gone before are unacknowledged. Eric Hobsbawm rejected segmentation in his study, *Age of Extremes*:

The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991 (1994), treating the sixties as part of a period beginning in 1945 with the dropping of atomic bombs on Japan, and the start of the Cold War, running through to the global economic crises of the 1970s.

Right-wing conservatives have used the segmentation process to play ideological mind games, amongst them British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (in 1982) and American Professor Allan Bloom (in 1986). For Thatcher the 'fashionable theories and permissive claptrap' of the sixties created the undisciplined, unrestrained society she had to whip back into shape, while Bloom dismissed the tertiary rebellion and intellectual ferment of the sixties by likening it to German Nazism during the 1930s, readings of the past nourished by the narrowness and isolation of the segmentation process.¹⁴

A snowball effect was generated by the Vietnam War. The centuries long struggle of the Vietnamese people for national independence, Australia's part in the latest episode of imperialist history and the way this was explained, justified and conducted on the home-front, led many Australians, especially amongst the post-war baby-boomers, to develop wide ranging radical, political and social critiques. These led to personal transformations and to political actions that challenged accepted decision making processes and many of the social manifestations of power, from the power of the state, to the power involved in personal relationships, and to the ways in which race and gender were constructed and construed.

The Labour Movement - the trade unions, the ALP, the small parties and organisations to the Left of the ALP - was variously affected by, and helped influence and shape the cultural revolution of 1965-1975. For many young people the ALP came to represent the promise of an end to conscription and Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, and especially after Gough Whitlam became leader in February 1967, their hopes for a better society in which egalitarian and social justice principles could take rein. For many of these people the 1969 and 1972 Federal elections, the last gasps of the Cold War, were their political introductions.

However, it was not until the Tet Offensive dramatically exposed the spurious 'we will win, we are winning' rhetoric of the US and its allies in February 1968, that Australian public opinion began to dramatically shift against involvement in the War. Expediently, the Whitlam ALP leadership began to harden its general opposition to the War, promising in October 1969 to bring Australian troops home and in 1971 to repeal the National Service Act. Well before this, it was the dogged opposition to conscription and criticisms of 'the immorality and the horrors of the war in Vietnam' of ALP leader Arthur Calwell (1960-1967), echoing the anti-conscription, anti-British sentiments of his youth in 1916, and the energetic and informed anti-war opposition of left labor politician Dr. Jim Cairns, that cast the ALP as a key player in the cultural revolution that defined the period.¹⁵

This book is largely structured in the same way as the Conference - there are eight sections looking respectively at the anti-Vietnam War and anti-Conscription movements, the Student and New Left movements, Women's Liberation, the movements for Gay and Lesbian Rights, the Aboriginal Land Rights and Civil Rights movements, the anti-

Apartheid movement, the Trade Union movement, and the ALP between 1965-1972. The speakers gathered by Conference organisers were all veterans of the movements, campaigns and struggles they recollected and reflected upon. Their words as published have been lightly edited from tape recordings to ensure continuity, and to eliminate such things as repetition, repartee, possible legal problems, and the like. In the main these are not academically researched and footnoted papers, but rather what they were at the outset, talks by period activists; some assume a common inside knowledge, as is the case when friends and comrades gather. But for all that, what we have in the end are recollections and reflections, at times sensitive and vulnerable, much of it new to the public record, which ideally will enrich future research and writing about the period.

This collection is a contribution to plugging the political and cultural gap in the historical record relating to Australia in the 1960s and early 1970s. Despite impressions to the contrary, there is an absence of accounts from participants in the period's rebellion and militancy. As author Michael Hyde, himself a prominent Melbourne-based radical of the period, recently observed, 'those of us who were in the midst of that mighty social and political upheaval that shook the world have been conveniently forgotten. Don't let it happen.'¹⁶

I take minor issue here with Hyde. Arguably it was not a matter of being 'conveniently forgotten', but rather 'deliberately forgotten'. During the late 1970s, and through the following two decades, Australia's political and cultural conservatives networked, insinuated themselves in institutions, linked with the money of big business, and rallied to destroy the hope and social justice legacies of the sixties and early seventies, promoting notions of democracy as theatre and entertainment rather than as hands-on involvement and participation by informed, concerned, critical citizens. Otherwise it could not be business as usual.

Not only had the legacies of the period to be dismantled, but the future had to be locked up so that something similar to the tumult and change and empowerment of the sixties and early seventies could not happen again, which is basically what the agenda of the Howard Federal government has been since it came to power in 1996. As part of this destructive process the period had to be trivialised, marginalised, portrayed as an alien, hedonistic, blip on the otherwise clear-radar-screen of Australian history, and silenced, leaving those who value the period with 'the task of reviving dreams and resuscitating memory'.¹⁷

For the most part the book is focused on New South Wales and Sydney. The Conference was organised with this in mind, in an attempt to place on record experiences fleetingly glimpsed elsewhere by writers elaborating a national perspective¹⁸, and to demonstrate the myriad ways in which the social protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s, while being national in one sense, reflected and were shaped by a complexity of local factors. This point was later emphasised by the proceedings of the 'Radical Times: Brisbane in the Sixties and Seventies Conference' organised by the Brisbane Labour History Association (September 2002).¹⁹

*Rowan Cahill**

ENDNOTES

- * Feedback from colleagues Damien Cahill, Terry Irving, and Beverley Symons, was helpful in my writing of this Introduction.
- 1. The term 'political midwife' has been appropriated from Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett, *Seizures of Youth. The Sixties and Australia*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1991, p.13.
- 2. Alan Barcan, *Radical Students: The Old Left at Sydney University*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South, 2002, p.1.
- 3. Donald Horne, *Time of Hope: Australia 1966-72*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1980, p. 5.
- 4. Ibid.
- 5. The quoted words belong to Paul Strangio, made in reference to the career of Dr. Jim Cairns and his role in the anti-Vietnam War movement. See the obituary for Cairns by Strangio, 'Jim Cairns (04.10.1914-12.10.2003)', *Labour History*, Number 86, May 2004, p. 204.
- 6. Mark Davis, 'Towards Cultural Renewal', in Nathan Hollier (editor), *Ruling Australia. The Power, Privilege and Politics of the New Ruling Class*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2004, pp.182-183.
- 7. G. B. Harrison, *Night Train to Granada. From Sydney's Bohemia to Franco's Spain: An Offbeat Memoir*, Pluto Press, Annandale, 2002, p. 9.
- 8. Walter Noack, Errol's father, reflects on his son's death, conscription, and the Vietnam War, in Greg Langley, *A Decade of Dissent. Vietnam and the conflict on the Australian home front*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1992, pp. 49-51, 211.
- 9. Australia's first, and often overlooked, encounter with conscription is detailed in John Barrett, *Falling In: Australians and 'Boy Conscription', 1911-1915*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1979.); see also Bobbie Oliver, *Peacemongers: Conscientious Objectors to Military Service in Australia, 1911-1945*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, South Fremantle, 1997, pp. 11-28.
- 10. Ann Curthoys, 'Mobilising Dissent: The Later Stages of Protest', in Gregory Pemberton (editor), *Vietnam Remembered*, Lansdowne, Sydney, 2000, pp. 138-141.
- 11. The proposed legislation became public in January 2000, when the 1969 Cabinet documents were released by the Australian Archives. The legislation was proposed by Attorney-General Nigel Bowen, a month before the 1969 October Federal election. New offences included 'unlawful assembly', 'riot', 'bringing of a foreign government into disrepute', 'assembly near a diplomatic mission or consular office', 'intimidation or harassment to draw attention to Commonwealth law or policy'. Penalties included jail terms of between six months and three years, and fines of \$500. The Gorton Cabinet kept the proposed legislation secret because it was likely to generate a great deal of public criticism, and was legally contentious.
- 12. The Australian anti-war and peace movements have attracted many researchers, but much of their work has not been published, or exists in journal article form (some of it in outlets not considered 'academic'). For a brief, useful overview of the long history and tradition of the Australian peace movement see Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy, *The Australian Peace Movement: A Short History*, Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1986 (Appendix 1 and Appendix 11, pp. 74-76, contain valuable introductory bibliographical data to the area).
- 13. Barry York, *Student Revolt! La Trobe University, 1967-73*, Nicholas Press, Campbell (ACT), 1989, p. 8.
- 14. Thatcher and Bloom cited in Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties. Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c. 1958-1974*, Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 4.
- 15. 'the immorality...' quote is from the speech by Calwell at the Mosman Town Hall in 1966, on the night he survived an assassination attempt. For a discussion of ALP policy on the Vietnam War see Rick Kuhn, 'The Australian Left, Nationalism and the Vietnam War', *Labour History*, Number 72, May 1997, pp. 165-167; and for the ALP response to the anti-war movement, M. Saunders, 'The ALP's Response to the Anti-Vietnam War Movement: 1965-73', *Labour History*, Number 44, May 1983, pp. 75-91.
- 16. Michael Hyde, *Hey Joe*, The Vulgar Press, North Carlton, 2003, p.214. During the sixties and early seventies, Hyde was a prominent student militant based at Monash University, Melbourne. *Hey Joe* is possibly the first Australian novel to tell the story of the period from the point of view of a militant.
- 17. Anthony Ashbolt, 'Hegemony and the Sixties: observations, polemics, meanderings', unpublished Workshop paper, p.15, 'Hegemony: Explorations into Consensus, Coercion and Culture' Workshop, University of Wollongong, 14 and 15 February, 2005.
- 18. See, for example, Donald Horne, *Time of Hope*, and Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett, *Seizures of Youth*.
- 19. For a report on the Brisbane conference see Drew Cottle, 'Radical Times: Brisbane in the Sixties and Seventies', *Labour History*, Number 84, May 2003, pp. 121-122.

CONFERENCE OPENING COMMENTS

GREG PATMORE*

The 1960s seem to have not actually started in the sixties. We are talking about a time period but we may also be talking about a spirit which seems to transcend the 1960s in terms of the way we feel about so many different issues. When I think about the 1960s I think about the immediately preceding period - the 1950s - which in many ways were a conservative's dream run. If one reads the literature of the 1950s, it appeared that we were experiencing "the end of ideology" which was one of the terms that was used; that class conflict was dissipating. All kinds of things were being talked about in the 1950s and conservatism seemed in the ascendancy. Well, you cannot predict things. Obviously the 1960s provided a complete counter to this belief that class conflict and ideology were ending.

The events of the 1960s have had a profound impact on all of us. I am thinking about some of the areas where I teach and read and research in terms of my own interests. Of course, the impact upon labour history as a field of study was enormous. Up until the 1960s I think it is fair to say that labour history largely focused on institutions of the labour movement - the trade unions, Labor Parties, various political parties, biographies, all the stuff of labour leaders. But what the 1960s did, intellectually, was broaden our vision of labour history quite dramatically. We were starting to recognise issues of gender, race and a whole range of different issues were brought in that we had not previously considered, which took us beyond the traditional institutions of labour history in trying to understand the development of working life in Australia. So that is one thing I think about in regard to the 1960s.

There are also practical outcomes in terms of people's day to day lives. Anyone who teaches industrial relations or human relations, knows that we now have a raft of legislation which protects the rights of people, particularly in the world of work. I am thinking about anti-discrimination legislation and equal opportunity legislation, and the consciousness that people have the right to jobs, irrespective of their particular background. That is one of the other important impacts.

However, many of these issues are still with us. We should not sign off about the 1960s – reconciliation and an array of issues of women's rights are still very important and are a continuing issue for campaigning and fighting. Think about the glass ceilings, think about a whole range of things that people talk about in terms of discrimination. Those issues are still with us and still to be noted in terms of dealing with and fighting about.

As well, the issues of peace and war are obviously very much with us at the moment, the dilemmas of how we deal with these sorts of issues internationally. Clearly that is an issue that has played on all our minds over the last week and will continue to do so in the coming period.

* President of the Sydney Branch, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, at the time of the 2001 Conference.

CHAPTER ONE: THE ANTI-VIETNAM WAR AND ANTI-CONSCRIPTION MOVEMENTS

MAVIS ROBERTSON*

Many concerns brought us to that day in May 1970 where we demonstrated against the Vietnam War. Many events and issues had moulded our opinions. We spilled out from the Town Hall steps right across George Street to be hemmed in by Woolworths' windows. We then filled the spaces way past Bathurst Street on one side and part way down George Street towards Market Street on the other.

The diverse concerns, events and issues of the 1960s all played a part in getting us there. Consider some of these – not necessarily in chronological order or even in order of importance – which influenced many people to join the Moratorium in 1970.

In 1961 I remember Sharpeville, although there were very few images on television and practically no one in mainstream political life who mentioned it at the time. That brutal event and the lack of response reinforced in me, and many others, the notion that democracy was always conditioned, and that outrage against violence was often selective.

This was not exactly surprising given that the United States then, as now, was designated the leader of the free world and at the time was a country divided. Those who sought to end racial discrimination there were vilified, brutalised, beaten, jailed and murdered. I can still see in my mind the black children set upon by alsatian dogs, handled by the police, because they and their parents had the temerity to want an end to segregated schooling.

These were also years of political assassinations – John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King being the most obvious, but in reality they were only a small section of the victims of a disturbed and divided nation and world.

The post-war peace movement was born out of the cold war where on balance it seemed a sick joke to label the United States the bastion of freedom and democratic values, and it was not too difficult for many to see the then Soviet Union as more sinned against than sinning.

The 1960s were also marked by the Cuban missile crisis. If you have seen the recent film, 'The Thirteen Days', you can capture some of the atmosphere which we felt at that time. For myself there has been no other time, before or since, when I felt so close to a World War Three, or to recognising that the danger of a nuclear holocaust

* A leading activist in the peace movement, the anti-Vietnam war movement and the Vietnam Moratorium Organising Committee, 1960s-70s.

was imminent. Day after day a growing number of citizens came to demonstrate at the US Consulate, then in Margaret Street near Wynyard Station. When the Russian ships steamed onwards to Cuba we really wondered if we would be back the next day. When the ships turned around, relief overwhelmed us. We saw the agreement as a victory for common sense and a guarantee of Cuba's rights.

In the same period when the Soviet Union ended a moratorium on nuclear testing with a massive explosion, the peace movement began to shift from a partial acceptance that Soviet nuclear weapons were an understandable reaction to the US monopoly of such weapons and that their existence curtailed some aspects of US military power. After that, peace movement participants seldom articulated the notion that there were good nuclear weapons confronting bad nuclear weapons, and the concept of a nuclear-free world began to gather strength.

Nevertheless, the US continued to be the world's policeman, rewarding those whose anti-communism it applauded, whatever their democratic or, more likely, their anti-democratic attitudes and punishing those who would not conform. It is a sobering thought that a small Caribbean island state has had just on 40 years of a blockade, as punishment for its non-conformism. Little wonder that Vietnam, faced with a divided world communist movement, made common cause with Cuba.

By 1965 Vietnam was sometimes being mentioned in the Australian press. Those who read *Tribune* were often well informed, because a succession of its journalists were posted to Hanoi to report from that country. We knew that Ho Chi Minh was a modest man who had led the fight against Japanese imperialism – the French colonialists had, of course, fled. He declared independence in a speech based on the US Declaration of Independence. We knew too that when the French colonists tried to regain lost territory in Vietnam, the Vietnamese fought and won an epic battle. In the aftermath the United States had moved in first with so called advisors and then through various escalations to full-scale war.

But it was not Vietnam that was fully in focus in the mid 1960s. The war of words between the USSR and China involved various countries as surrogates of the main protagonists. Hence Yugoslavia and Albania fought their own war of words. Much later and long after the demise of the USSR, that war of words became a real war.

The war of words found echo even in Australia, but more importantly helped many on the left to face – at last, some would rightly say – the nature of bureaucratic, state socialism. This led to some resurgence in philosophical discussions about the true nature of democracy. The discussions were lively and varied – workers control, limited tenure of office, charters for democracy and a sense that democracy everywhere was faulty, not only because of the role of economic power but because democracy has to account for minority opinion, not just crush it or ban it or persecute it.

Hence many issues not previously discussed in the left began to be discussed, including the plight of Soviet Jewry, the labour camps and the various foreign policy options, especially in respect of newly independent countries where the hope of political advantage often saw principles abandoned.

In the 1960s the government of Sukarno, the national independence leader of Indonesia, which included the PKI (the Communist Party), engaged in a confrontation policy with Malaysia. A period of instability led to what was claimed to be a failed coup against the military. In the actual military coup which followed which brought Suharto to power, upwards of three million people were killed. They were mostly ethnic Chinese and some were members of the China-leaning PKI. The brutality was incredible, yet most of the world was silent on those atrocities. The Americans had helped to engender that coup. The Russians saw the result as a further reason to criticise Maoism. In Australia the red arrows continued to point downwards from China through most Asian countries, as if to threaten us and take us over, but suddenly Indonesia was promoted as part of the democratic world. It took more than 30 years of that military dictatorship of Suharto to lose the support of America and Australia. The military has not lost it even now.

Slowly but surely Vietnam moved to centre stage. Consciousness was built as so-called strategic hamlets were constructed of barbed wire, some of which came from Australia, to contain parts of the population. Seamen and other maritime workers found ways to express solidarity by refusing to load such cargo, or to sail the ships containing the cargo. Later, trade union strength became a key factor in the success of the Moratorium movement.

There were many and varied actions, including rallies at the former stadium at Rushcutters Bay, following marches through the city. Visits from and to the United States brought a reality check on democracy again. Leading Labor parliamentarians – Jim Cairns, Tom Uren and John Wheeldon – were several times refused visas to the United States to undertake speaking engagements there against the war. The Eureka Youth League held vigils at the US Consulate on Friday nights and as military involvement grew and conscription became a reality, a whole new series of organisations came into being, such as the Draft Resisters and Save our Sons.

The 1966 election was something of a shock. Those who believed that if people were given clear choices they would always make the right choice, found that the Labor Party which had bravely opposed conscription polled the lowest vote in living memory. One response to electoral defeat was community organising. This included almost every known artist, writer, musician, coming together in Arts Vietnam. Also, campus organising and school organising – the latter new to Australia, with children being punished for wearing Moratorium badges. And a significant new movement initiated by Bob Gould, the Vietnam Action Committee, which attracted many young people. The peace movement was evolving into an anti-war movement.

Against all this, as background, came 1968 in Paris, when for a few weeks it seemed that everything in old concepts could be challenged. Then in Prague, where the hopes of democratic socialists were soon crushed under Soviet tanks.

A new world of TV war showed us Vietnamese scenes which could not be ignored. The napalmed child running down the road is still there in our collective memory. It made it harder to be any of the way with LBJ.

In retrospect it is my view that of all these events, activities and struggles, the ones that

most influenced United States and Australian public opinion, that led to a majority rejection of the Vietnam war, were bound up in conscription and the resulting body bags, the perceived unfairness of the lottery of death and the courage of the resisters.

Perhaps conscription might have been more acceptable if it had been universal and if casualties had not been so great, especially American casualties. This is another way of saying that the second key issue was the Vietnamese themselves, who were tenacious and unwavering in their struggle for liberation. They were the first to deny victory to the mighty power of the US military machine. They made many of us believe that right can overcome might. They appealed to the conscience of people. How was it possible that so much talent, so much wealth could be diverted into a war machine which sought to crush a peasant people with so few material resources – and fail?

Out of all this, slowly, sometimes painfully, here in Sydney and around Australia, we found ways for people with different views, even opposing views, to work together. People who did not normally trust each other, people who had never made common cause, now did so. All those preparatory meetings, all those negotiations which, with some goodwill, ensured that most voices were heard in the preparations and in the public forums. This was essential for the success of the first Moratorium, which exceeded expectations. Mostly we tried to respect the rights of those within our movement with whom we disagreed and we relied on a range of organising centres to help achieve this.

We even learnt to negotiate with the police and other State officials to ensure that mass peaceful demonstrations are not something that we have to ask permission to achieve but are, or should be, our right.

We were fortunate too to have leaders of great integrity, not least Jim Cairns who worked at every conceivable political level around Australia to build for the Moratorium – from national forums attended by thousands, to suburban meetings attended by only a handful.

There was one other influence I associate with that time. Most of what is now called the women's movement was very new in the late 1960s but it was there and it was called Women's Liberation. I cannot say that it always united the anti-war forces, when in reality it challenged and even offended some. But it invigorated many women, including long time activists, to think differently, to act differently and to contribute more profoundly. It also ensured that the thousands of mundane tasks which must be done in any successful movement were shared tasks, not just women's work. It is one part of the movement of that time which continues to influence the way many of us live in this multi-faceted time.

I have tried only to convey something of those heady but complicated days and years. If you were there, I hope I have helped trigger some good memories. If you were not, I hope that what follows will whet your appetite to know more about the sixties and its achievements.

BOB GOULD*

I have brought along a large pile of papers from my ASIO files, from when they started observing me in 1955, including my Special Branch file. There are 3,300 pages of it. I have calculated that I am probably the \$2 million man, in the sense that the State apparatus probably spent something in the order of \$2 million on observing my activities in different forms. I will come back to that later, because it is a very useful source document.

In a certain cynical way I am almost grateful to the State apparatus for observing me so closely, because now that I am writing memoirs and social history of the period, it is a tremendous aid to memory. They remind me of many things I had forgotten and they give me the dates accurately, although their view of what we were doing varies in its quality and content.

In 1964 myself and a couple of other people called a meeting to start the Youth Campaign Against Conscription. The main initiators were Wayne Haylen and Barry Robinson. Haylen was the son of a Labor politician who was a mate of Arthur Calwell, the Labor leader, and they were friends of mine through the ALP Left. Sydney in those days was a very different city to today. Its population was 2 million, compared to the 4.4 million in the area now. The first wave of postwar migration was just beginning to come into their own – mainly people from Europe, there were very few Asians in Australia. Sydney was a quiet town on a Sunday afternoon. There were no theatres open on Sundays and if you wanted political entertainment you went down to the Domain. However, 400 people turned up to the meeting in the Lower Town Hall and opposed conscription.

The Communist Party of Australia (CPA) was then a powerful institution. I had left its orbit in the 1950s and was a member of a small revolutionary socialist Trotskyist group. I was the secretary of the Sydney Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, modelled on the British CND, which called for no nuclear bombs in Australia. We thought that would get a resonance here, but it did not get much. We were sharply in opposition to the CPA, which was still a quite significant social institution, with some 6-7000 members, and with institutional influence in the labour movement. The battle between the broad left, the CPA and the Groupers, was still raging in the labour movement.

Arthur Calwell, the Federal Labor Party leader, who had a background of a complex character, turned out to be the most courageous man in the history of Australian politics, in some senses. In 1965 when it was announced that Australian conscripts would go to Vietnam, he marched into the Parliament, nailed his flag to the mast and dragged the ALP, kicking and screaming, into opposition to the Vietnam war. Calwell was a man of enormous courage in relation to those things. The group that I was associated with formed a political bloc within the ALP and sheltered behind him. The fact that as Labor leader he belligerently opposed the war provided the basis for the broadening of the anti-war movement in the first stage.

* Convenor of the Vietnam Action Committee, 1965-72.

When we started the Vietnam Action Committee in 1965 we were kind of in opposition to the world. The CPA did not like us much and that feeling was mutual. On the other hand they were a proletarian organisation with a network of influence in unions and shop committees. We appealed over the heads of the CPA leaders to the rank and file, compiled a mailing list and started up. The general anger at the war led to the ranks of the CPA, workers and a lot of youth becoming involved. In the event, the youth movement was created.

In retrospect, that particular period, from 1965 to 1975, was the high noon of the twentieth century. I was born in 1937, the year of the Moscow trials, the Spanish war and fascism. Victor Serge called that time the 'midnight in the century', the grimmest period of the twentieth century. I would say that 1968 was one high noon of the century and another was when the Vietnamese marched into Saigon in 1975.

The period was not the social revolution that those of us who approached it from the left thought, but it was a period of an immense rite of passage. It was the first major development of the youth revolt against the general complacency of capitalism. Youth culture was born in that period, 1965-75. We rode that wave in a sometimes unthinking way. We didn't really know the magnitude of what we were doing, but it wasn't a bad time to be alive. There were a lot of things I would do a bit differently, but I would not change the main thrust of our agitation and I am sure that is the feeling of most people who were around at the time. I think it was Wordsworth who said about the period of the French revolution – to be alive in the period was pretty good, but to be young was very heaven. I still feel the same way about that decade of the 1960s-70s – we did pretty good things.

Coming back to my ASIO file, which is an amazing document. First I will say something about the methodology of the ruling class. The Special Branch section is mainly material produced by agents who were in organisations. There is a little bit blacked out but most of it is clear. ASIO relied overwhelmingly on phone taps. Despite the fact that we knew we were being tapped we always used the phones, because there was no other way of organising. You made a desultory attempt to be discreet, but in retrospect we were very indiscreet. They had people laboriously taping it all, and there it is. As it happened I was at the centre of all kinds of rebellions and organisations, and one thing that the ASIO handlers did was that if you were mentioned in somebody else's telephone conversation, they put a copy of that telephone conversation in toto in your file. Now I was the noisiest, most factional, most energetic agitator of the lot and I figured in heaps and heaps of people's conversations. So I now have a slice of the ferment and events.

The striking thing about the period was that we fought hard because an immense number of ideological and political questions were involved. We succeeded in uniting on major political questions with people with whom we had profound disagreements. That was no mean achievement in those conditions and over time we got to know and respect each other.

JACK CAMBOURN*

I would say that any study of Australian trade union history, back to the nineteenth century, would reveal an element of support for the struggle of oppressed peoples around the world. Some of the best expressions of that came during the First World War, the anti-conscription fight, the Great Depression, the poverty and privation of peoples in that period. Even though the working class who were involved in trade union activities were themselves experiencing great difficulties, that was also a period of growth in their understanding.

After the Second World War we saw then the more matured development of the trade union movements and the support they were able to give to the struggle for the emancipation of peoples in the former colonial world. Some of the best examples of that were seen on our own doorstep, particularly the struggle of the Indonesian people who threw off centuries of Dutch colonial rule, as well as people in other parts of the Pacific. The union movement matured and developed and grew during those periods, in terms of their understanding of the political process.

The difficulty that arose when the Vietnam war developed as far as the labour movement was concerned, was that there was a division between the trade union leadership of the left and the formal leadership of the Labor Party, particularly in New South Wales which was under right-wing influence. Specifically, I recall that in the centre of the Trades Hall in Goulburn Street, the right wing were engaging in a process of sending young union activists who fell under their influence, to the United States for programming. That had a lot to do with the build up of their opposition to what the left were doing in respect to the war. There were incidents like a visit from the Labor Attache of the US Embassy in Canberra, who was part of that activity, who knocked on the doors of most of the unions in the Trades Hall, offering assistance to all and sundry.

In our union, when we developed the opposition to the war, we started out in the traditional manner of organising opinion amongst workers. That included lunch-hour job meetings, where we could get a stop-work meeting of people to listen to speakers about why we should oppose the war in Vietnam. As one would expect, we found some difficulties to start with. Workers were influenced at that time by the Federal government's propaganda about the red hordes coming down. There was also the failure of the Labor Party to gather support in opposition to the war. That always had some influence, as it does today, on working class opinion. But we started off and we stuck to our guns and finally, we were able to gather in a lot of support amongst large sections of the union membership.

In 1972 we got agreement amongst fairly influential sections of the rank and file to send the union's secretary to Vietnam on a fact-finding mission. He was in Haiphong when the US Airforce engaged in saturation bombing of the port and ship-building facilities there. On his return he was again involved in the work of building support for opposition to the war and was armed with the experiences he had gathered while

* Secretary, NSW Branch, Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association (FED&FA), late 1960s-70s.

in Vietnam. During that period the union was part of the broad left in the union movement and in the Labor Party and other working class organisations.

Concerning the attitude of the Labor Party leadership, it was a great pity that at that time, Whitlam saw fit not to line up with the anti-war movement. To all intents and purposes my memory of that period is that he pretty much went along with the establishment view about the war, until towards the end of the war when Australians in their thousands were marching in Moratorium protests. Whitlam then decided that the best thing for him to do was to become part of that important movement. The same could be said for the right in the NSW Labor Party. I got quite a pleasant surprise at one of the big demonstrations at the Sydney Town Hall, to see the NSW Labor Council Secretary, John Ducker, up on the steps as part of the official party opposing the war. Those were heady days. Of course, the big problems were the existence of the Cold War and so on, which were all working against us.

CHARLIE BOWERS*

In June 1966 three Sydney Catholic women concerned about the possibility of the conscription of their teenage sons for the Vietnam war, decided to send a circular letter to all the Catholic bishops of Australia, pointing out the growing divergence between the Vatican and Papal pronouncements on war and on the Vietnam war particularly, and the attitudes of their bishops and clergy here in Australia. This letter, signed by Noreen McDonald, Jeanne Ashbolt and Mary Garnsey, said in part:

The war in Vietnam has caught the conscience of Catholics all over the world. We the undersigned Catholic women have tried to find proper spiritual guidance on the problem. We are especially disturbed by the various public expressions about Vietnam made by our own clergy here in Australia, since these statesmen seem to us to be in conflict with the recent significant Papal pronouncements.

This letter went to Cardinal Gilroy, Archbishop of Sydney, along with the other bishops. And it was like knocking the top off a boil. Gilroy responded to it very promptly – in fact he was the first to reply, which was interesting because it was the only time he put in writing his feelings. In part he said:

People whose conscience is caught by the war in Vietnam have reason to be gravely concerned as indeed have all people who cherish freedom. This dreadful war by which international communism seeks to dominate South Vietnam as it dominates North Vietnam, is a tremendous threat to world peace. The importance attached to this campaign by the leaders of communism, is evident from the world-wide propaganda favouring the communist viewpoint. What is particularly sad is that many decent people are completely deceived by this clever propaganda.

Speaking directly to the women, he said:

If you are Catholics I suggest to you to pray for peace and for the conversion of communists. Never forget that the one permanent immovable object of communism

* Catholic Chaplain at Lidcombe Hospital, 1967-69, a founding member of Catholics for Peace and an activist in the Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament (AICD).

is to dominate the world, and that includes Australia. Victory in South Vietnam would be another step towards achieving that plan.

As the writers suggested, Gilroy was very much out of step with the statements of Pope John 23rd at the Vatican Council and even of Paul 6th, who was rather more conservative than John 23rd. The Australian Bishops conference which met in Sydney in April 1967 came out with a more moderate statement about the war. And in response to that statement, which was mainly the work of Archbishop Gilford Young of Hobart, a meeting was held in April 1967 at the house of Mrs Noreen McDonald in Longueville and Catholics for Peace was formed, with Colin McDonald, her husband, as its first president.

A letter announcing the group's formation was sent to Cardinal Gilroy with 25 signatures attached, four of them being priests of the Archdiocese of Sydney – Roger Pryke, Ed Campion, Dick Synnott and myself. At this meeting it was decided to hold a seminar on peace at St Johns College, which was also addressed by Dennis Kenny and John Burnheim. The statement of aims of Catholics for Peace noted that the recent statement on peace by the Australian Catholic bishops had said that as well as supporting and urging all urgent initiatives for restoration of peace, all citizens must share the responsibility of reviewing constantly the moral issues involved in the conduct of the war. In the light of this statement and the individual efforts of a number of Catholic clergy, Catholics for Peace was formed.

Things moved on swiftly from there. The first Catholic draft resister came before the court, with John Burnheim from St Johns College supporting his case before Mr Rogers, the Magistrate. This drew a response from Gilroy through his spokesman, Dr Murray, condemning the position that a Catholic could be a conscientious objector. Catholics began to march under the Catholics for Peace banner at the Moratorium marches.

I also became a member of the Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament (AICD), together with other clergy: John Beer from the Anglican Church and Alan Walker from the Methodist Church. About late 1967 we went to Canberra and met Jim Cairns and Tom Uren there and Gough Whitlam came out and spoke to us. It must have been late 1967, it was certainly before the Tet offensive in South Vietnam. Whitlam was obviously doing a fence-sitting job or being very careful, but he was also very interested that there was a Catholic priest there and you could see the wheels going around in the back of his head. I think that started the slide towards him starting to think that perhaps this might be a more general movement than he thought because the Catholic Church, and Catholic groups are starting to get involved.

In April 1968 I was one of the speakers at a protest meeting in the Sydney Town Hall, along with Charmain Clift, Alex Carey, Ken Thomas of TNT and many others. In that speech I said:

On Easter Sunday morning when expressing his hopes that peace moves in Vietnam might be successful, Pope Paul 6th emphasised his absolute neutrality. Any notion that the allies are waging a kind of holy war against communism is obviously not subscribed to by the Holy Father, even though some Catholics would seem to hold this view.

This meeting did not get wide publicity except in *Tribune*. A copy of that article was sent to Gilroy and I was called in to explain myself. During this interview, he said that I was being used by communists. When I suggested to him that just because an issue is supported by communists does not necessarily make it wrong, he replied with the remarkable statement that everything the communists do is evil. It was then that I realised that I was not dealing with a rational man.

When Cardinal Gilroy stepped down from his position as Archbishop of Sydney in 1972, it was the end of an era. The *Catholic Weekly* ceased commenting on the international political scene, confining itself to reporting nuns' and priests' jubilees and rambling on about the State Aid issue. On the surface all appeared to be normal but underneath, the church in Sydney was suffering a massive haemorrhage of membership. I believe that this was due, among other things, to a loss of confidence in the church because of its inability to take a moral stand on the Vietnam issue.

All around the world the church suffered great setbacks in those years, but none greater than in Sydney when Catholics saw their leaders, bishops and priests, first backing a corrupt regime in South Vietnam and then supporting a cruel unjust war which was eventually condemned as hopeless and unwinnable by the majority of the Australian community.

NOREEN HEWETT*

The Save Our Sons (SOS) groups nationally might have been small chips in the huge mosaic of the anti-Vietnam war movement in Australia. But they were among the first to be formed, braving early hostile public opinion to demonstrate dissent to conscription for Vietnam. Almost daily they handed out leaflets and demonstrated on the streets of the nation's cities supporting conscientious objectors and draft resisters.

Joyce Golgerth, mother of a potential conscript, joined an anti-conscription demonstration in the gallery of Federal Parliament by the Union of Australian Women. It was soon after Menzies had announced the birthday lottery selecting 20 year old conscripts for the Vietnam war. She then approached me as another mother of a conscript to cooperate in forming a movement of women focused on opposition to conscription for Vietnam.

The first meeting of women in Sydney was on May 13, 1965 which decided the name and formed the SOS. Immediately, it captured national news coverage. Seven days later, on May 20, the Sydney SOS women joined in a silent vigil of clergy outside Parliament House, Canberra, to protest against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam war. The Victorian SOS was formed in August 1965 and a month later SOS women from NSW, Victoria and Queensland conducted a demonstration and lobbying mission in Canberra.

Sydney SOS may have appeared a staid, matronly group. Members of the Victorian

* Co-convenor of Save Our Sons in Sydney and national SOS coordinator, 1960s.

SOS, led by Jean McLean and other Labor activists, were younger and more overtly militant. However, while each State and regional SOS had its own characteristics, all were unique in being wholly led and run by women.

Activities under the banner of Save Our Sons spread to most states in Australia. At first there was Sydney coordination, but later contact was mostly through the exchange of information and newsletters. Regions developed their own activities and support groups for draft resisters. SOS gave particular attention to those who may not have received personal support from families. As the ramifications of the Vietnam war became clearer, SOS women linked their opposition to conscription to recognition that it was the people of Vietnam who were victims of this dirty war.

Most Sydney SOS women were new to political action. There were Quakers, Catholics, Methodists, agnostics, atheists, Labor, Communist, even Liberal and non-party women who worked closely together. SOS also joined with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Quakers in anti-war actions.

There were inevitable anti-communist tirades by press and politicians. Buzz Kennedy, radio commentator, covered the first SOS demonstration at the first conscript intake at Marrickville army barracks. He spotted me as a communist and so suggested on radio that SOS was a communist front.

SOS members were undeterred by the labelling. A Catholic woman in SOS, Noreen McDonald, subsequently organised an approach to the Catholic bishops on the issue of Vietnam being an 'unjust war'. She later helped form 'Christian Women Concerned' which broadened the base of church opposition.

Why were SOS women so unstoppable in those early days, long before the huge demonstrations of the late sixties? I think partly because of the personal/political thing – many had conscript sons. But also the government moved fairly quickly against individuals who just refused to be conscripted – Bill White and Simon Townsend for example. SOS women supported every objector, but these cases had national publicity early on. It was SOS women who demonstrated at Bill White's home when he was arrested. They were at every major event supporting him.

SOS helped organise 'practice' sessions for objectors who might face legal or other grilling in a court. They were in the courts to give support and outside them to call for public support for the particular objector.

They were at most anti-war activities. I remember one day during a Federal election when they were at morning, afternoon and evening meetings, the first where 'All the Way with LBJ' Holt was speaker. Security and police had a heavy presence and Liberals in attendance were hostile. One man physically attacked a small, frail SOS woman while senior security officer, Longbottom, watched without intervening. Then I was shoved aside by a police officer when I attempted to reach 15 year old Lee Brown (now Lee Rhiannon), who was being held by the police. That evening we went to the third event, a demonstration in support of Bill White at a Liberal election rally. On a

brick fence outside the hall sat Longbottom and his men. As we passed he asked wryly, 'Don't you women ever get tired?'

As the war progressed, and the number of draft resisters increased, so did the determination of the SOS women. The jailing of the Victorian SOS women hit national headlines and an excellent film made of this period by Jean McLean's daughter is now part of the historical record.

Sydney SOS joined a broad coalition of organisations convened by AICD (Association for International Cooperation and Disarmament). It also had consistent contact with the Youth Campaign Against Conscription. In 1968, SOS organised a rural Caravan Against Conscription for the Vietnam War. Simon Townsend, David Mowbray, Rex Hewett and various other supporters joined this.

We had been warned not to tour rural areas. The USSR had invaded Czechoslovakia and some said this would increase hostility in the countryside to anti-Vietnam war action. But SOS knew from contacts how hard it was for draft resisters in country areas. Simon Townsend was keen to come and publicity highlighted him as a speaker. So the Caravan tour (about five or six vans) went ahead. Daytime street discussions and night meeting venues had been organised beforehand.

At Wagga we were met by a group of bikies. The leader strode over, singled out Simon – to our apprehension – and shook his hand. That night the public meeting was attended by locals, including Army men and the bikie leader. Insults were exchanged and a brawl looked like developing. Suddenly an onlooker shouted, 'sit down, sergeant, and shut up.' The belligerent soldiers left. The order was from an Army captain with his own concerns about the war.

It turned out that the Caravan tour was being undermined. Bogus leaflets were distributed in our name. Returned Services League (RSL) members and Army men were urged to attend and disrupt events. In Albury, the bogus leaflets had been widely distributed. Yet as we talked with locals on the street, participants increased in numbers until they spilled over into the roadway. When we eventually retired reluctantly to the Cathedral church hall which was our base, debate still raged outside among hundreds of locals. That night the Felix Greene film on Vietnam was shown. The hall was packed by local residents, and a number of Army and Air Force men. But there was not a word in opposition to the speakers' anti-war stance. Similarly in other areas, including Orange and Bathurst, support was evident after speeches, even though some people clearly had come intending to disrupt.

There are many good memories of SOS actions, not least how the women forced red-baiter, W.C. Wentworth, to beat a red-faced retreat after they outfaced him in Canberra. To me the SOS women showed how even apolitical women, initially dedicated to a single issue – conscription – through action and debate, came to understand the unjust nature of the Vietnam war itself and were confident in articulating the broader issues.

SOS maintained its identity throughout the Vietnam war. And as the huge people's

movement against the war developed, they became an important part of it. They attended every intake of conscripts in Sydney including the last one. They withstood physical as well as verbal attacks. Many were involved in organising places for draft resisters avoiding arrest and support for those who were jailed.

I have worked in many organisations of women who might initially be seen to be more conservative than their male partners. I have seen such women become politicised in the course of struggles, even developing a 'fight to the death' stance, when the men have recognised as political reality a need to compromise. This was the position of many coalfields women during some strike struggles.

I do not know how many of the SOS women became involved in the Women's Liberation movement which developed from and after the movement against the Vietnam war. In any event, I think they may have recognised the spirit and commitment of women's liberationists as akin to their own important contribution as women to the anti-Vietnam war struggles of the Australian people. Save Our Sons existed from May 13, 1965 to April 18, 1973.

CHAPTER TWO: THE STUDENT AND NEW LEFT MOVEMENTS

ANTHONY ASHBOLT*

For some years now, the 1960s have been contested terrain. Many commentators have rushed to specious judgements about the radical politics of the era, while others have struggled valiantly to keep memories alive. Much of the politics of the contemporary epoch is being played out through the lens of the sixties. This seems like a grand and perhaps foolish claim but it needs to be understood that the neo-liberal and/or neo-conservative agenda (and I will include hawkish foreign policy in this) is substantially directed at burying the sixties, the radical sixties. The gains of the various social movements, in particular the anti-war and civil rights movements movements, have been under attack since the mid-1970s.

The new right, as it was known then in the mid-1970s, was a revanchist movement seeking to recover and reconstitute traditional structures of authority. Subsequently, the fall of the Soviet Union and the triumph of neo-liberalism in much of the west, signalled an end not only of the Cold War but also, of course, an end of history and specifically the sort of history which concerns utopian dreams of a **different** society and concrete struggles for a **better** society.

Yet, paradoxically, the neo-liberals and their fellow travellers on talkback radio (whose lack of an ideological perspective is matched by their lack of ethics) prattle on about the new chattering class of left-liberals, a class which supposedly dominates the current policy process. At the very time they and others are noisily burying the radical sixties, they announce its victory. This dialectical dance (and note that they do use a Marxist architectural framework) neatly obscures the contraction of the public sphere, the withering away of democratic politics, the transformation of citizens into consumers and the atrophy of social networks of solidarity.

There is no point in being nostalgic about the past but it is important to remember history and to revive memories of the 1960s as a decade when the structures of power in advanced capitalist society (and also in the Third World) were under assault, when democracy came alive in the streets, when those marginalised because of their race, gender or sexuality found a voice, when we knew that we were participating in the making of history. There are, of course, those who see only negatives flowing from this. Take the distinguished American historian, Stephen Ambrose, and his remarks about the anti-war movement in America:

The antiwar movement had a chance to create a genuine party of the left in America,

* Founder of School Students Against the War, 1965; student activist at Macquarie University, 1970s and active in the anti-apartheid movement. Currently lectures in Politics at the University of Wollongong, including on the 1960s protest movements in the United States.

but instead it took its opportunity to print a license to riot, to scandalize, to do drugs and group sex, to talk and dress dirty, to call for revolution and burn flags, to condemn parents and indeed anyone over thirty years of age, in an excess of free will and childish misjudgment seldom matched and never exceeded.

Personally I cannot recall it being that much fun. Perhaps we were more sober and staid in Australia. The Ambrose quote is from the Foreword to a 1995 book by Adam Garfinkel, *Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam antiwar movement*, the central argument of which is that the antiwar movement prolonged the war. This preposterous claim is fast becoming common sense, with a constant rewriting of history. There has been a spate of books rewriting the history of the war from the vantage point of imperialism. It is thus more urgent than ever that we keep alive our memories and our knowledge of the sixties and of the events surrounding that decade. The rewriting of history is helping fuel a bellicose American foreign policy, something with which those of us once active in the antiwar movement are only too familiar.

The historical distortions and mythologies are also evident in Australia. Take the recent ABC television series *Australians at War*. Its elevation of the Vietnam vet to the figure of tragic hero came at the expense, yet again, of the Vietnamese people. Its general grasp of history was fragile and solipsistic, while its treatment of the antiwar movement was both cursory and derisory.

As memories fade, mythologies abound and the radical sixties are to be held accountable for every contemporary sign of moral degeneracy. Yet underpinning the politics of the period was a profound sense of morality; a moral urgency which confronted the evils of racism and imperialism and injustice. From the southern preachers like Martin Luther King to Catholic priests like the Berrigans (or in Australia, Edmund Campion and Charlie Bowers), the overtly religious dimension of protest in the 1960s should not be forgotten.

Yet morality, of course, is not the exclusive preserve of religion and we all, even those of us in the counterculture, operated within a definite ethical framework. To be sure, a prudish morality was questioned, lifestyles were opened up and there was cultural experimentation which may have seemed on the surface to be amoral or, for some, immoral. Yet even the slogan "make love not war" (which may sound corny now) resonated with moral urgency. Hippies developed a living critique of the spiritual wasteland of urban America, first in the cities themselves and then later in the country.

Whatever the inadequacies of that critique, it still has force today and may have helped change the way we eat or grow vegetables or think about the environment. So, too, the ideas of the new left and civil rights movement reverberate today, even in what is meant to be something entirely new - the anti-globalisation movement. After all, affinity groups are back - do the young anti-globalisers really think they invented them, or the idea of loose free-floating coalitions (which were a feature of the Berkeley campus in America in the 1960s)?

Histories of sixties radicalism in America tend to bypass the labour movement. It is received wisdom that the labour movement there was pro-war. Yet this is not entirely accurate and the labour movement had been involved very much in civil rights campaigns. (One needs only think of Miles Horton and the Highlander Folk School which trained both labour and civil rights activists and of the song 'We Shall Overcome' which started out as a spiritual, became a labour song, and ended up as the signature tune of the civil rights movement). Moreover, Students for a Democratic Society began life as the youth organisation of the League for Industrial Democracy, a social democratic organisation with strong links to the trade union movement. And it is no coincidence that the San Francisco Bay Area became effectively the western centre for social, political and cultural dissidence, as that region had a strong labour, pacifist, communist and anarchist heritage.

Indeed, the Communist Party in the Bay Area (and the west coast as a whole) was more progressive and more in line with the 1960s social movements than elsewhere in America. Thus it was that the leader of the civil rights campaigns in 1964 in San Francisco, particularly those concerned with the Sheraton Hotel and Auto Row, was Tracy Sims, a young black woman member of the DuBois Club, the youth wing of the Communist Party. Also, Bettina Aptheker, another DuBois Club member, was a leader of the Free Speech Movement. And Carl Bloice, manager of Robert Scheer's Berkeley peace campaign for Democratic congressional nomination in 1966, was a prominent local communist. The distance between the old left and the new was not as great in the Bay Area as elsewhere in America. Moreover, the new left was never entirely new anyway and even in America eventually returned to the class politics which had informed the old left.

Similarly, in Australia the trade union movement and Communist Party played a significant role in the social protest movements, particularly the civil rights and antiwar movements, but also later in the environment movement. Indeed, the Green Bans can be regarded as Australia's signal contribution to environmental action internationally. Those who imagine that the antiwar movement was simply a young people's movement, forget the early involvement of trade unions and organisations like Save our Sons. Far too much has been made of the generational aspect of sixties radicalism. Sections of the student population did arise as rebellious fractions of schools and universities. Almost invariably, however, there were older mentors present to provide guidance and wisdom.

This is true even of the counterculture - in America, the whole Haight Ashbury phenomenon was really begun by people already in their thirties or older, and was propelled by a cast of characters like Allen Ginsberg, who were hardly all young (which is not to deny the overwhelming presence of youth in Haight Ashbury by late 1966). In Australia, Ian Channel proved inspirational to many much younger than himself. In short, the movements of the sixties (and in terms of periodizing the sixties in Australia, I do take it up to 1975) were cross-generational, even though the young did have special roles to play.

To remember the sixties is to remember a time of dynamic political activism, exciting cultural experimentation and intellectual engagement with the issues of the time. Many

of us became Marxist through our initial involvement with the antiwar movement which compelled us to understand the nature of imperialism, and thus the nature of capitalism itself and before long we were reading not only Marx but also Marcuse, Lukacs, Gramsci, Fanon, Sartre, Adorno. This is well before fashion overtook sense and designer label thinking began to pose as radicalism.

Remembering history is an act of passion, not of nostalgia. As racism, xenophobia and jingoism once again gain a grip on the people of America and Australia, it is timely, indeed, to cast our minds back to the days when our ideals and our energy and our sense of moral urgency helped stop a war, helped curb the tide of racial intolerance (if only momentarily), helped save a historic part of Sydney, helped inject some intellectual vitality into the universities and even into the media and helped guarantee some extra rights for workers, women and oppressed minorities. We may have reached out at times for the impossible, for an unachievable utopia. In doing so, however, we kept alive the idea of the good society, an idea which is urgently in need of revival.

GREG MALLORY*

I am a Queenslander, but I have dual membership: I am a member of the Sydney Branch, Labour History Society and also a Vice-President of the Brisbane Labour History Association. So that is part of the reason why I am here. But the main reason is because I have wanted to talk about the sixties for a long time, particularly in the last couple of years of discovering the material contained in the University of Queensland Administration Archives.

This paper consists of three parts. Firstly, the major events that occurred on the Queensland campus between 1966 and 1971; secondly, the attempt to bring some history together to get people to talk about what happened in the sixties, 25 years down the track in 1992, when we organised the Brisbane Radical Reunion; and finally, the discovery of the University of Queensland Administration files.

I started off at the University in 1966 as a pretty naïve Christian Brothers' boy and was not really politically active at all. I came from a Labor Party family, but my first impression was seeing people being bashed in the streets at St Lucia, trying to actually march down the street in protest against the Vietnam war and being bashed by Queensland police. What emerged from that was a huge civil liberties struggle which basically led to September 8, 1967, when virtually the whole of the University moved from the St Lucia campus to Roma Street in the heart of the city. On that Friday afternoon, 114 were arrested, 4000 people marched and 3000 followed. There were about 7000 full-time students, so virtually the entire University moved from the St Lucia campus onto the streets. That was in response to the fact that you could not march in Queensland, you could not protest and so really, as well as being an anti-Vietnam movement, it was a movement for the right to march, the right to hand out leaflets in Queen Street in the city. So there was a whole range of other issues that Queenslanders had to contend with.

* Activist at the University of Queensland campus, 1967-71; Secretary, Queensland University Labor Club, 1968; organiser of Brisbane Radical Reunion, 1992.

The movement developed in a variety of ways. In 1968 there was an international movement in support of the National Liberation Front, and at a Brisbane demonstration a number of people were arrested, including Dan O'Neill, who was arrested for trying to speak outside the Treasury (now the Casino) in the middle of the city. The police smashed up the Red and Black Bookshop, which was the centre of radical activity at the time.

Then we had the Vietnam Moratoriums in 1970. There is an interesting photo taken at the Roma Street Forum, where there were maybe 6-7000 people. It shows Brian Laver, a leading radical from the campus, and George Georges, who was the leading person in the Labor Party at the time, and wharfies who are actually preventing Brian from speaking at the Forum. It is a very interesting photo because it shows the divisions between the Labor Party and the trade union movement, and the more radical elements of the student movement being led by Comrade Brian.

But the most interesting aspect, I think, was looking at the situation around the Springboks Tour. When I went to the *Courier Mail* to do the research, I just could not believe the amount of material in the paper from about the time when the Springboks arrived - it was on all of page 1, all of page 2, all of page 3. There was actually a police riot, they chased people down Wickham Terrace, down the path, a wild chase in City Park. The interesting thing about that is that one of the people they were chasing is now the Premier of Queensland. In fact he ended up in the Trades Hall where he was locked in and protected from the police by a couple of unionists.

Another photo was of the Saturday night when there was a huge demonstration after the game and I think there was another police charge. Another illustrates the way that 900 police were assembled from all over Queensland. There was an incredible amount of police mobilisation, and looking back 30 years later, I found it quite remarkable to remember all that happened and the police presence in those particular demonstrations.

During the period, 1966-71, the campus of the University of Queensland was alive. Every day you would go there and there would be something new, someone had put out a new leaflet. Support the NLF stickers were on sale and you would go round and put them up all around Brisbane. There was Students for Democratic Action (SDA) that Brian Laver was very involved in. Its paper, *Student Guerilla*, came out once a week, maybe more, and discussed various issues of Vietnam and civil liberties.

After 25 years, I thought it would be a good idea to get people together for a couple of reasons. One, for a celebratory thing, to have a dinner, which was held in Parliament House. We also had a day of oral histories and documentaries of people speaking, interviews, which we did at a university campus, with three film crews following us around.

I have had access to the University of Queensland Administration Archives over the last year or so and have been able to photocopy quite a lot of files. In 1970 there was a very significant event on the Queensland campus, when the South Vietnamese

Ambassador, a man called Quang, was brought in by the rightwing Democratic Labor Club. He was held in a room for about an hour by radical students and this led to the police coming onto the St Lucia campus and a major police and student fight. Out of all that three students were suspended. The archival materials start from that incident, in that there are three boxes in the Administration Archives, so no historical material appears to be there pre-1970.

There was a demonstration of students in support of the people suspended from the University – each of the participants in this demonstration are identified with numbers, and are then linked to a list of student cards that have all been photographed. Then there is a list of the names of the students. These lists probably went straight to every State and Commonwealth Government department, Mt. Isa Mines and all those places where students might seek employment. If you were attempting to be a teacher, as in my situation, it was a bit difficult because I assume that went straight onto the Education Department.

I have here a report by a fellow called Hunt-Sharp, the University of Queensland's Security Officer, who was well known on the campus. This is a memorandum - it is handwritten and then typed - to the Assistant Registrar, the University of Queensland, St Lucia. Firstly, I will set the scene. In those days I was interested in a variety of things as well as radical politics, including going out with women. So, as the saying was in the old days, I was courting someone, a friend who worked as a typist in the University and I used to go to see her every couple of days and we would go to the pictures together and so on. What they made of this is really interesting and I will read it.

'Subject: Information received during past two weeks from Chris Burns, student, to the effect that "We have our contacts in every floor of the Administration Building, and know what is going on".

Report: As a result of above information which I considered a very serious allegation regarding "Security" within the University Administration, I have endeavoured to obtain evidence of any radical contacts within the Administration Building. At 1.50 p.m. on 25th November, 1970, I observed a radical student and tutor leave a group of other radicals at the Refectory and enter the Chemistry Building. I know this student as Gregory W. Mallory (Photo No. 14497). I again saw this student, Mallory, a few minutes later enter the Administration Building and at about 2 p.m. I overheard Mallory inquiring at the fifth floor for a Miss de Pinna. At about 2.05 p.m. on 25th November, 1970 I observed a staff member known to me as Miss de Pinna in conversation with Gregory W. Mallory at the top of the stairway at the fifth floor of the Administration Building. This observation by me, plus the fact that a male student known to me as de Pinna is also a suspected radical (a brother of Miss de Pinna) indicates to me that the selection of staff utilised within the Administration Building is far from satisfactory from a security point of view.'

I will leave it there.

ROWAN CAHILL*

(Session Chairperson)

Thank you, Anthony, for your Introduction and Greg for the Queensland insights. On the matter of university files, there is in my ASIO file for 1969 well-informed data regarding my proposed M.A. thesis and my dealings with the Sydney University administration regarding a disciplinary matter. It is material that suggests a university based source.

I am going to ask the panellists to explain biographically and briefly how they came to be involved in the radical movement. One of the myths of the period is that it was something that you moved into really easily, just like putting on a new set of clothes; no meaningful politics were involved, you just left school and went ape shit politically. Personally, for me, it was an evolutionary process and not simply a matter of being radicalised by Vietnam and conscription in a Road to Damascus manner.

My drift to radicalism began at High School on Sydney's North Shore. Amongst my school teachers were young post-war idealists, some of them communists, from whom I absorbed a sense of education as excitement, and as a transformative personal and social process. In Leaving Certificate English I got a solid dose of the Romantics, glimpsed Jacobin intellectual circles of the late eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries, and from this gleaned an inkling that protest and rebellion were perhaps okay.

A new Modern History syllabus aimed at linking the social, economic and political in the context of world history from 1750 onwards, and gave the notion of social class a run. I picked up the idea that revolution was maybe an historical necessity, and found that in spite of Empire/Commonwealth Day and 'God Save the Queen', it was hard to be in love with imperialism.

An English teacher introduced me to John Anderson's essay, 'The Servile State' and helped me with its complexities, the recognition of history as struggle, the idea of permanent protest and opposition.

Add to this brew the middle class satires of A.D. Hope, Barry Humphries, *Oz* magazine, and in many ways I was a radical waiting to go off. Prime Minister Menzies, the Vietnam war and conscription took care of the rest.

I will now ask the panelists to explain how they came to be on the Left.

* Activist in the student/New Left movement, 1960s-70s.

JOHN PERCY*

I don't know whether I was a radical waiting to go off for many years, because I was quite conservative at high school and not very political in my first year at university. But at the beginning of 1965, obviously under the influence of what was happening in Vietnam and the introduction of conscription, I joined the Sydney University Labor Club.

At Sydney University at that time there were three leftish clubs. The Labor Club was generally dominated by people in the Communist Party or the Eureka Youth League, often with parents in the Communist Party. Prominent ones at that time were Ann Curthoys and Brian Aarons. The ALP Club was a split from the Labor Club, and probably the dominant people in that were people influenced by Trotskyism, including Hall Greenland and Sylvia Hale, but a mix of people. Then there was the Fabian Society which had split away from the ALP Club the previous year. It included the real ALP, the ones who wanted a career – Jim Spigelman was one of the prominent ones at that time.

It was a bit accidental that I joined the Labor Club, even though it was probably the most active club. A friend's sister had been a member in the past, so he and I both joined it. It was a very rapid politicisation and radicalisation in 1965. Having scored good marks the year before, 1965 was not a very academic year for me, what with full-time organising against the war and other things.

Probably a turning point for me which led to a certain consciousness that this was a serious thing I was getting into and I had better be committed about it, occurred in Canberra in the 1965 May vacation. A regular Australian Student Labor Federation conference was held each year when all the Labor and ALP clubs around the country got together. A decision was taken there to have a demonstration against the Vietnam war. So the conference adjourned, marched downtown, sat on a pedestrian crossing in Alinga Place, and I think 15-16 of us got arrested. I haven't heard of any earlier examples of people being arrested on the issue of the Vietnam war, so I think these might be the first arrests.

That was a very eye-opening event for me, both being arrested and also sharing a cell with a person I found out was in the Communist Party and he explained to me that the Brian Aarons who I knew as a Labor Club leader, was actually the son of Laurie Aarons, the Secretary of the Communist Party. The night was spent in some basic education in Australian politics and left politics and history. It was also at that event that I first became aware of Bob Gould since he was also there – he was not a student, but he went to all these events and was one of those arrested. The rest of us were charged with normal things, but when the cops investigated Bob's record they came up with a list of about a dozen events, not necessarily related to protests, including some horrendous non-political allegations. He convinced them that these were not done by him, but that his name had been used. Anyway, that was quite a turning point.

* Student activist and a leading member of the Socialist Workers Party (later the Democratic Socialist Party), 1970s.

So in the 12 months from joining the Labor Club at the beginning of 1965 to the beginning of 1966, I went from being a very naive student to being convinced of Marxism of a Trotskyist variety and being convinced that this was a serious thing to devote my life to. As well as campaigning against the Vietnam war, to try to build an organisation which could bring about a fundamental change in this society, a socialist revolution.

By the beginning of 1966, as I said, I had become convinced of Trotskyist ideas and so in the elections for the Labor Club that year, I stood on the urging of others who had also been convinced in that direction, to stand as secretary against the Communist Party nominee. We won, so I became secretary of the Labor Club, and further cemented my involvement and commitment.

WENDY BACON*

For quite awhile, if someone had asked me this question, I think I would have said, Oh I was not very radical when I was at Melbourne University in the 1960s - I left school in 1963 and went to university in 1964. Then suddenly I came to Sydney and met the Sydney Libertarians and I was a radical ready to go off like a bomb. But I have actually had to revise that. First of all I found a photo of myself in Collins Street in Melbourne sometime in the sixties, with a petition about conscription, being interviewed by the ABC. I have absolutely no memory of that but I have no doubt that it occurred.

I think probably my radicalisation began in about 1961. My grandmother was one of the leading women, I think she was the first woman to speak at the General Assembly of the Uniting Church in Melbourne, and she had a few contacts there with other Presbyterians in the Labor Party. She lined me up to give a speech at the Presbyterian Ladies College (PLC) on why China should be in the United Nations, and she educated me too, so that I could give the speech in a credible sort of way. It so happened that my teacher at the time was a member of Moral Rearmament. I nearly got expelled for that. Suddenly they went into overdrive on why China should not be in the United Nations. So I think I began to think about politics then.

When finally, PLC decided to invite me back to speak – I think it was the 30-year reunion – I looked at a few school magazines and found I wrote a few poems about things like the evils of television and about sitting in smoky coffee lounges and doing other beatnik-type things. Also, I certainly remember seeing Peter Seeger and Joan Baez at the Melbourne Town Hall and being very affected by that.

However, I think the most important period for me was when I came to Sydney. I had actually gone to the Democratic Club when I first went to Melbourne University and it shows how naïve I was, it actually turned out to be the Democratic Labor Party Club and I did realise that was not for me. The Labor Club did not really seem to be for me either. So when I moved to Sydney, I met the Sydney Libertarians in 1967 and that obviously had a dramatic effect on my life. But I think, looking back, it was partly

* Activist in student and other protest movements, 1960s-70s; as editor of the University of New South Wales student paper, *Tharunka*, she was convicted of exhibiting an obscene publication and was subsequently denied admission as a barrister.

about how many other people the Libertarians connected with. I cannot remember when I met people like Bob Gould and eventually Meredith Burgmann and other people, but it was a big circle that had big parties, that went to pubs, that talked to lots of other people. I remember later on meeting people in the Communist Party, particularly Alec Robertson, editor of *Tribune*.

The other thing that did influence me a lot was the development of the offset printing press which made a lot of things possible that would not otherwise have been. Eventually, with a group of other younger libertarians – and the libertarians were in the process of themselves becoming more involved with direct action, they had gone to the LBJ demonstrations, especially the younger ones – a group of us, Liz Fell, Rick Mohr and others at the University of New South Wales, actually formed what was called the Sydney Futilitarians (we were influenced by the Situationists in France who were in turn influenced by the Dadaists and so on). So we were into an anarchist critique of socialism even then. Then we decided that perhaps that was a little bit too negative so we became the Kensington Libertarians.

Meanwhile I had also gone to an anti-war demonstration in Canberra with some people from the Sydney Labor Club. So I was sort of following different new directions. We decided to abolish the Students Council at the University of New South Wales, because we wanted to show that government was not necessary. So we produced a newspaper at Liz Fell's house in Paddington that weekend (we bailed someone out from Long Bay who could do layout), to show that you did not need to have a Council to have a newspaper.

We actually had so much fun that we decided that we should stand for election (which was a bit of a contradiction) for the editors of the University of New South Wales Student Council's *Tharunka*. So with Val Hodgson, who I think had been in the Labor Club, we did *Tharunka*. I wasn't very caught up at that stage with any sort of factional things at all. I knew people who were Trotskyists and people who were in the CPA and I wasn't actually that involved with those differences. One of the things I noticed looking back at some of our *Tharunkas* a few years ago, is not so much the sexual stuff which was what landed me in prison. There was a really interesting debate with Brian Aarons about whether or not to support North Vietnam, and it reminded me of how the more libertarian side of the left, which had become very strong at UNSW, had a critique of what we saw as left wing authoritarianism.

Nevertheless we all went on the Vietnam Moratoriums, which were very strong out at UNSW by 1970. On the other hand, instead of red flags, I think we carried either red and black or lots of different colours, and I remember writing a column in *The Australian* eventually which was a bit of a critique of Hall Greenland's speech at the Moratorium. So obviously I became more involved in those internal debates as things went on.

I suppose a really important turning point in my radicalisation was in 1971 when, as a result of wearing a nun's habit into a court with 'I've Been Fucked By God's Steel Prick' down the front of it, I landed up in Mulawa Women's Prison, which was quite

a shock to me. (I had never even been into a court until I had been arrested in the Gurindji land rights demonstrations a few months before). Even though I had been radicalised, to actually go into prison and see women in there who were homeless and other things, was a turning point for me. When I came out of prison, although it was only a few days, I felt a definite separation from close friends (although I remained close to them), in that I guess I had some sort of feeling about class and imprisonment that I had not really had before. One way or another, that led to being part of the founding of the Prisoners Action Group and later Women Behind Bars, which became a strong movement in Sydney, also to my involvement in the Green Bans period.

So that is a bit of a snapshot of some of the events which influenced me at that time. I do not actually believe I stopped developing politically- I think it is an ongoing process and I cannot actually identify exactly where it all stops and starts, because of course there was also the women's movement which for me started in the early seventies as well.

HALL GREENLAND*

Listening to John and Wendy, you get some idea of the richness of the period which the sixties generation came out of, and the rather variegated and extraordinary world of that movement at that time. My own personal trajectory, when I look back on it, is quite simple and straightforward. I suppose I was not so much a bomb waiting to go off, but a guided missile. My mother was a saint and what I mean by that is that she worked by day for a Stalinist-led trade union, by night she was the Secretary of the Vietnam Action Campaign and was Bob Gould's administrative arm, and she was also in the Labor Party. So I came from that kind of family and to become a radical at university was something that was expected and ordained and I would not have wanted to have done anything else.

When I got to Sydney University, I fell in with a bad crowd – Sylvia Hale and Roger Barnes and Bob Gould – and they eventually passed me up through their food chain to Nick Origlass and there was no getting out of it then. So given that personal disposition, the times were such that there was no further escaping it. Because something that people have mentioned in passing, I think is very important. The twentieth century gets a bad press sometimes, but it included the great anti-colonial movement, that movement whereby imperialism and racism were rolled back and the whole of humanity stepped onto the world stage as actors of history and became human and citizens and so on. That was the greatest movement of the twentieth century.

In the sixties there was no escaping how extraordinary that reality was. We had grown up with Gandhi and Mao and so on, but we had the Cubans straight from Central Casting as far as anti-colonial, anti-imperialist revolutionaries were concerned. And again, straight from Central Casting if you like, we had Martin Luther King and Malcolm X in the United States and if you want to go on, we had Ho Chi Minh and General Giap and so on.

* Activist in the student/New Left movement, 1960s-70s.

So I think we were very conscious that history was being made and was summoning us to do our little bit. And so we did the bus rides and the demos and the war had to be fought, which taught us the value of education and campaigning and mass mobilisations and perseverance and so on. In my case, I suppose it was an intersection between my own upbringing, the milieu that I stepped into when I came to university and the extraordinary historical times that we lived in. So that kind of trajectory which I like to think I am still on, was our fuel, our gunpowder or whatever. It was fairly inevitable and not something that I could have escaped, or would have wanted to escape, and something I will never want to escape.

GILLIAN LEAHY*

I probably fit in with Rowan's type of trajectory, the one of a bomb waiting to go off. I remember that when I was perhaps 12, I went to a Eureka Youth League camp, in Adelaide I think. I have no idea why, my parents were never in the Communist Party, although my aunt was. So we had a radical aunt. Also, my parents always voted Labor and at various times were active in the Labor Party, although that was later. My father was a libertarian, he studied under Anderson, and from a very early age we had libertarians around at parties at my house.

Then in 1967-68, my last two years of high school when I was at French's Forest High (Sydney), my English and History teachers took me and a friend, Brenda McPhee, and many other students to demonstrations against the war. That is what they regarded as what they should do to educate us, for which I have been forever grateful. In those last two years of high school, my older brother and I used to visit Bob Gould's establishment in Goulburn Street, SCREW - the Society for the Cultivation of Rebellion Everywhere. I still have some of the SCREW posters, which were in that sixties kind of wobbly writing. Things were supposed to look like that when you were taking acid I think – and there was plenty of acid taken there, as I remember. Then also, while still at school, Jim and John Percy were involved in High School Students Against the War which I was recruited to and spoke, I think, at a student forum that John organised at one time.

I came to Sydney University in 1969 so already I was active to some extent. The year after that I became involved in the women's movement while still being involved in the left. I joined the Labor Club and I had certain problems with them at times, I guess. But I also dabbled with SDS (Students for a Democratic Society). The Labor Club at that stage, in the demonstrations and the Moratoriums, was always interested in getting more confrontation. We always talked through our tactics and what sort of flying wedge or whatever we would deal with and whether we would link arms and who would get arrested and who did and who didn't want to get arrested, and therefore what position they should be in, and so forth.

Our aim in the Labor Club was to get more arrested – the thinking was something along the lines of escalating the conflict and making the capitalist state act out its

* Activist in the student/New Left movement, 1960s-70s.

fascist tendencies for all the world to see and escalating the number of arrests and the number of people involved. Of course, things are not that simple. On the other hand Students for a Democratic Society were more affected by the hippies and the anarchists and were in favour of sit-downs, non-violence and imaginative behaviour. I felt myself constantly torn between the serious Marxist radicalism of the Labor Club at that time, and the more hippie anarchism of SDS.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Rowan:

The question that should be raised is, was there indeed a New Left? And if so, what was new about it?

John:

I don't think it was really a New Left. It was called a New Left but any of the groupings that were trying to portray something as new were really just reinventing and dredging things up from the past. Some of us were dredging things up from the past that had to be dredged up, but some were going back to more utopian and more liberal perspectives that had been rejected by past left movements. As we became Trotskyists, we were going back to the past too, we were trying to go back to Lenin, so that is not new. The people who grabbed most readily at the label, New Left, were going back as well, but to different political perspectives.

Gill mentioned SCREW which became Resistance – that embodied two of the directions in which the movement could go. When we formed SCREW, Society for the Cultivation of Rebellion Everywhere, in the Leninist form we still had the second set of acronyms, Sydney Committee for Revolution and Emancipation of the Workers, going towards one of Lenin's early organisations. It was frivolous yes, and we had to reject that after a fight with the anarchists, and changed our name to Resistance. But setting up an off-campus youth organisation like that which could appeal to young workers and high-school students, as well as campus students, was an important step forward.

It had to confront something that was there, a contradiction in the sixties radicalisation. It was both a cultural and a rebellious thing, but the cultural thing is what the bourgeoisie nowadays tries to make it into completely, as Anthony said. That is what they want to remember – bell-bottom trousers and music and pot. Now we were into pot too, and acid, and one of the first posters that SCREW produced said Legalise Pot, but we also produced another poster which said Ho Chi Minh To Win. Those were the two directions – both the cultural and rebellion. We were moving more and more in the direction of serious politics, and certainly when we changed the name to Resistance, that was an affirmation of trying to build a serious socialist youth organisation.

Wendy:

I think there is a difference between identifying breaks in political debates. I have always taken the New Left to be part of the debate about the critique of authoritarian forms of socialist organisation, both in the States and certainly in 1968 in France, and people here were part of that inside what happened to the Communist Party here. So

I see the New Left in form, in shifts in political debate. But in terms of trajectories of people, it is quite clear that it was a very strong connection with where people had come from. People may have shifted their position, moved into new groups, but they were influenced by the people who came before them. So in terms of people there wasn't such a thing as the New Left that wasn't part of the Old Left.

Hall:

I agree with everything that has been said. However, I do think that what was absolutely new and seemed to me to be very important, was that the general movement in the sixties was an attempt to introduce democracy into the state, family, places of work, education, the schools and so on. It was that element of participatory democracy that was absolutely insisted upon by the rank and file, people who were in organisations who were activists - that they had to be involved, they had to be consulted, they had to make decisions together. I think beyond that, in the generation who would turn up to demos, who went to communes or lived in collective houses, or whatever, that whole idea of the absolute centrality of participation and democracy, was something that that generation rediscovered. In that way, the left of those times was a New Left.

Wendy:

But didn't we only rediscover it, didn't we go back to the Russian experience and all of that?

Hall:

Yes, the great times of 1905 and 1917 before they got snuffed out. Yes, that is true, in Spain and so on, it went back and rediscovered and renewed those things. I did say it was kind of like a renewed left in a way, but it was that centrality of democracy that seemed to me to be very important. What I was just about to say, was the Czechoslovak experience, socialism with a human face. One of the demos I remember going to, in London in August 1968, where Brian Laver was one of the speakers because he had been chased out of eastern Europe, was in solidarity with the Czechs against the Warsaw Pact invasion. So it was a movement that didn't just renew the old left, but rediscovered the new and developed some of the more democratic, libertarian traditions in the left.

Gillian:

I largely agree with what the other speakers have said. At the time I thought we were in the New Left, but once in it - reading Emma Goldman, being aware of the earlier struggles, even in fact what had happened with the Communist Party, one was aware of history and that there had been more democratic movements on the left that had been our antecedents.

Rowan:

I would like Hall to talk about the critique of the university and its relationship to the capitalist state, that he was involved with in the 1970s. There was the Victoria Lee struggle, which was an attempt to help a young student establish the right to study jointly at, or have a degree from two universities, as I understand it - something which we accept today. Also the struggle against infant economic rationalism at the Economics Department at Sydney University, although we did not understand it was

infant economic rationalism at that time. I suggest that this was one of the new things to the left at the time.

Hall:

This democratisation was going on in the universities and this whole ideological critique of the role of the university in the prevailing political culture and so on was being contested, and there was an attempt to open up the university to ideas, to people, to a much more critical role in society. If you did that in a kind of determined kind of way, there were casualties along the way. People moved that Vice Chancellors' offices be occupied and so on, and for doing those kinds of things people got suspended or expelled. It was an attempt to bring the revolution home in a way, to transform the places where we happened to be caught up in at that particular time. So, there was a contestation of authority and ideology and the role of universities.

There was the whole idea of the new proletariat as well, that universities were producing the workers of tomorrow and to equip them with democratic, critical or even socialist consciousness was something that we ought to be trying to deal with, if we were going to develop the relationship of forces and lead on to the revolution and a free and equal society. Those kinds of things, which were, as Anthony said, the utopian dimension of both the political and cultural sides of the sixties, were extraordinary. We did actually use the word revolution, believed in it and considered that was what we were trying to do. It is something that is often lost in accounts of the sixties - that utopianism, that dreaming of a society that was free and equal, that motivated and bound us together.

CHAPTER THREE: SEXUAL POLITICS: THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

SUZANNE BELLAMY*

This morning's session emphasised for me my points of connection, but I think that in coming to terms with Women's Liberation we have to come outside that feeling of togetherness and say that while we all three had our connections, we were a movement born in opposition. It was last year [2000] at Daphne Gollan's funeral that I started turning that thinking back around. When I met Hall Greenland, Bob Gould and others again for the first time in many years, I was able to acknowledge to them then how much I had learnt from them, which I would like publicly to do here too today. Also, I would like to acknowledge the many people who were tremendously influential in the birth of the Women's Liberation Movement. You have to understand, though, that we had to enter into a period of struggle with men and some of it was very wounding on all sides. So this is my public apology for anyone who was unduly hurt by my obnoxious behaviour. However, I wouldn't have missed any of it!

As an artefact of those times, I have brought along the original layout of Kate Jennings' speech on the front lawn at Sydney University, including all the bits that have fallen off – 'you'll say I'm a man-hating, bra-burning, lesbian' and so on. It is a sample of early printed technology, neolithic practically if you think about what is available now for communication. It is lettraset, all yellowing, and it is now a sacred object. We put the date of the month on but not the year, but it was September 1970, at the front lawn, 31 years ago this week. That was not the beginning of Women's Liberation, but it was its great early public demonstration of our defiance and opposition to the movements out of which we sprung. We sprang in opposition, and why we had to must be confronted, even now. Those issues are still important, especially in view of the last ten days [since 11 September 2001], when we continue to deal on both sides of this new international conflict, with the rising masculinist militarism. There is no way around that. However, we have learned a lot and we have to have better analysis now.

About seven years ago I felt the need to confront in my own life, this tremendously critical pivotal period in my life. I invented what has become a performance piece, based in archaeology, which I call the lost culture of Women's Liberation, 1969-74, the pre-dynastic phase. I call it 'pre-dynastic' and therefore we are all pre-dynastic women, because after 1975 there was gain to be made in being a feminist. There were bureaucratic and economic and other reasons too, and also the integration and bourgeoisification of the movement began. But my case is that from 1969 to 1974, while all those other tendencies were there, this was indeed a classic pure ideas period akin to the rise of cubism in 1904-08 or any other of those great burstings forth. I think

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one of the huge questions we have to ask is, how did this spring forth? And why was it such a phenomenal rupture? That word, 'rupture', comes up for me all the time.

Yet I should look first at my own personal biography. I am a classic individual of that period. I was a working-class girl from a girls' school at Parramatta in the western suburbs and I got a scholarship to the university. Both my parents were workers, my mother worked in a factory. I put myself partly through university supplementing a scholarship by working in a fish factory which I subsequently wrote about. I came to Sydney University in 1966 and went into the History Department and, of course, went through similar experiences to many we heard about this morning. I was smart and I finally got a post-graduate scholarship. I was at a place, in a sense politically uneducated but very quickly thrown into a time in which, if you grasped it, you had the opportunity to greatly develop on so many different levels.

I know that everybody has their Women's Liberation story, but again and again the themes are that it was like a blinding light; it is almost like we all sound like Christian converts. There was a sense in which you can look back and see this pathway that you trod. For example, when I was at high school, I had a Latin teacher who was James Rawling. I only subsequently found out that he had been a member of the Communist Party in the 1930s and wrote *The Story of the Australian People*. There were people who fed into us all in various ways, but we came into a moment that was multi-generational.

I know one of the things that is important to state here is the unique style of those early meetings at 67 Glebe Point Road. The archaeological/humour project I invented in 1996 actually 'digs up' 67 Glebe Point Road in 500 years time, and is called 'The Lost Culture of Women's Liberation, The Pre-Dynastic Phase 1969-1974'. It includes house models and charts about the pre-dynastic women, their practices, food, sexual behaviour and so on.

What is very important to say is that this was a very multi-generational, multi-class – but not nearly enough multi-race – coming together. And for that very early period, there was tremendous struggle. The other key thing that I think is important to say is that this period was not one of unity, that in the lost culture of Women's Liberation, there were, I believe, four core principles. These principles were: (1) sisterhood is powerful; (2) consciousness raising; (3) the personal is political; and (4) direct action. However, we struggled about them, we didn't always agree on what they meant.

This was not a period of unity, but of great creative struggle. Not only were we struggling with one another, but we were struggling with the Left, we were struggling with who we were. This was identity politics at its very beginning. Who were the women who came before us? This was before the women's studies movement as well. We were in a period that I must say was personally so exhilarating that it defined the rest of some of our lives, in the sense that there were no books and there were no teachers; we were inventing. Now we might not have been very good at it, but we were who there was.

Another thing that I think is important in defining those early groups was a kind of internationalism which was new and which has also defined in some ways the rest of

my life. Perhaps I was like Topsy and just thought it was all marvellous, and certainly it was a rugged period and many people did not survive, or survived very wounded - and in the struggle there were many things that were hard to deal with. I don't like to romanticise this period, but I think that we struck a remarkable balance between tremendous influence and ideas from other places, particularly the United States of America which I call in the culture, 'Rome'. We had this relationship to Rome in the sense that we were hungry for ideas, we got thousands of letters. I know that in the years that I was at 67 Glebe Point Road there was prodigious correspondence - most of which we threw out, we were shockers as historians I have to say.

We had a rich pamphlet literature about small groups, about how to organise, consciousness raising, direct action, all these things. In fact, I don't know what it was, but there was this tremendous consciousness of originality. We can reflect upon this now and wonder to what degree we were being influenced by American culture and I think that is an important question. However, I think we felt original, that we were a fusion of many things. In particular, in Australia we were drawing not only on the American feminist experience and all their money, their press and so on, but the English and others. As well, I think we defined ourselves differently in having to some extent a better class analysis. Now, I think we were pretty shocking on that.

What I am particularly interested in, looking back, is not only defining this moment as an oppositional moment of tremendous originality, but of also seeing it in terms of today and where we would be in responding to current events - and where we failed. I do not want to be negative about it, but I do think it is quite clear that we failed tremendously on our race analysis. I remember several meetings with Aboriginal women that were, to me, extraordinarily poignant. Over birth control, for example, we clearly had oppositional positions. We were for abortion on demand; they wanted to save every baby.

I remember these kinds of moments very early on where I think that there simply was not the will, or the language, or the education, or something, to move past that. When I look back on that, those are my few regrets. I hope that in building on that period now, as I think we will have to in dealing with the next phase, that we have to look at what we *did not* get right as well.

JOYCE STEVENS*

I will just make a comment on the last point that Sue made about abortion, because I worked in that movement in particular. Not only did we not take into account the fact that some women did not want abortions, but we did not take into account that when some women got abortions, they were sterilised. That was another part of that movement about women's health and women's control over their own bodies and, as in lots of other areas, we learnt as we went along.

I want to talk about socialist-feminism. In a way the two words do not sit easily together

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and so it is not an easy matter to say what my socialist-feminism is or what it can be about. But I do believe that there is an important part of socialism that is essential to feminism and that is the stuff about work, employment, economics and how those things control people's lives. Now I do not hold this position because I come out of the 'Stalinist Old Left', as some people like to call the organisations that I have been in. It comes out of the experience of my life with my mother, who was married to a railway worker and had four children, living in tents and tin shacks and huts around the western railway lines of NSW and, although I did not recognise it at the time, became a very strong pro-worker for the workers and also a strong feminist. So my interest in that side of feminism really comes out of what I learnt at her knee. Somebody asked me one time where I learnt my politics, and I replied that basically, I learnt them at my mother's knee and what I didn't learn from her I learnt when I got married.

One can say a lot about socialist-feminism I suppose, but I would like to just talk a bit about the struggle to find some connection between socialism and feminism that took place on the magazine called *Scarlet Woman*. We had this discussion called 'into the socialist-feminist swamp'. The reason why we called it that was because we found it very murky and sometimes dark and sometimes we lost our way, because we did not know how to proceed with this. We knew that we wanted to make a connection between all of those things that Sue and I have already mentioned and the economics of women's lives, but connecting them up was not that easy.

Personally I have come to the conclusion that there are all sorts of things about political movements that you just cannot slot into one another and you cannot say this one is more important than that, or that one is more important than this. In the long run what will decide what you do about this or that, is what people want to do about it and how strong political movements are built around what you think is important. That is how, I suppose, we came to recognise socialist-feminism. The issues that feminists wanted to act around that dealt with the economic side of women's lives, became part of socialist-feminism and we talked about them.

I think the first conference that we had was in Melbourne at the time of the ACTU Congress and we all demonstrated outside the Congress and harassed the delegates as they went in. We had demands that had been drawn up that we wanted to put before the Congress. Now we did not get very far at that stage. It took us a little while to convince some of the people who had other powerful positions on the ACTU and other organisations, that we were really serious and that we were going to be a force to be dealt with.

So we started to try and have some discussions ourselves about what we thought about socialist-feminism and the publication, *Scarlet Woman*, initiated those discussions. It was not easy in the women's movement to even get agreement that we should have a socialist-feminist group. For example, I remember there was a group called the Non-Aligned Marxist-Feminists who you would think might be an ally for a socialist-feminist group, but was in fact one of our strongest opponents. So the process of even having a socialist-feminist group in the Women's Liberation movement had some quite strong birth pains. There were widely differing views about everything really, but in particular, about socialism.

We were working at a time – 1978 - when we knew that socialism as it was lived was not a fantastically inspiring policy or picture to follow. Nevertheless we wanted to persist in trying to humanise socialism through its connection with Women's Liberation. However, we did not get overwhelming support from women in the women's movement about this and we had quite considerable negative responses from many women. Some women thought that it was a communist plot, trying to take over the Women's Liberation movement. Some men thought it was a feminist plot, trying to take over the Communist Party. So it was beset by problems on all sides. Nevertheless we pursued the issues.

In the long run we arrived at a set of issues that we thought described what socialist-feminism was about, and these were the principles:

- Commitment to revolutionary change. Don't ask me what I think that is, all I know is that it is a fundamental change in a whole number of ways in the way that society is organised.
- Commitment to the autonomous women's movement – that is, a women's movement that was organised for and by women.
- Personal politics – that is, that it is not just about the basic wage or what the union does, but it is also about personal politics, how people live their personal lives, and how women are considered to be an absolutely decisive element in public and personal life.
- Collective methods of work. This has had a bit of a bad press. Basically I think that is because there have been various notions of what collective methods of work are. Some people seem to think it means that you never make a decision and nobody ever has to carry it out. I cannot see that as any sort of collective method of work. I think that is just everybody doing what they want to do.
- A stronger understanding of all of the sorts of social relationships that hindered the development of a better life for women. So that meant that we needed to understand how patriarchy worked, how the family worked, how relationships in paid employment worked, how governments worked. It meant understanding politics from the most personal to the broadest public politics. We also had to enter into a critical discussion with some of the people who called themselves socialists and marxists. Well, they entered into a critical discussion with us really. We had one particular socialist group, for example, who distributed a document titled 'Socialist Feminists Don't Be Fooled. Feminism is Alien to Marxism', and that the proper aim is to forge a vanguard Leninist party. I suppose that was one of the extreme responses to an effort to develop socialist-feminism.

Finally, a remark about the relationship between socialist-feminism and the Women's Liberation Movement in general and feminism in general. I have never considered and still do not consider that socialist-feminism is the acme of theory about women's oppression. I think that the development of feminism has taken place and has been engendered by women of all classes in all sorts of different places and in all sorts of experiences.

I agree very much with one of Sue's remarks, namely that, by and large, feminism has underestimated the importance of racism in this country and it has rarely developed a program that has addressed the needs of Aboriginal women. So I suppose we are like the rest of the Left in a way – we are not perfect, we have not been perfect, we have not finished our job, we have not even finished developing our ideas. But they are the sorts of ideas that we set ourselves.

LYNDALL RYAN*

I would like to go back to what I think are the origins of Women's Liberation in Sydney - how it began, my involvement in it, and why I consider it one of the most important experiences in my personal and political life.

I had been out of Sydney for about four or five years, both overseas and living in Canberra. I had come back and had got a job school-teaching and I was living in a flat at Balmain and was drinking at the Forth and Clyde. One afternoon a person called Sandra Hawker knocked at my door and said, 'We are having a meeting tomorrow to talk about women's liberation'. I assumed that she meant a group to form a support group to liberate the women of Vietnam, because I associated the notion of liberation with the National Liberation Front in Vietnam.

So I went the next day, which was about October-November 1969, either to The Avenue in Balmain or to Nicholson Street in East Balmain. There was a group of women there, most of whom I would have loosely called Trotskyists. They included Martha Ansara, who I think I met for the first time and who was very clearly American. Martha was talking about the oppression of women and I was shocked and horrified. She did not mean the oppression of women in Vietnam, she meant the oppression of women like myself. I remember getting up and walking out of that meeting, thinking this woman is mad. But by the time I got home, I realised this woman had something to say. In the process of walking home, I thought this woman has got something and I want to know more about it. I think I either went back, or went and talked to Sandra Hawker. I cannot remember what happened next, but a few weeks later I was attending some meetings of women on a Tuesday night in 67 Glebe Point Road.

It was the language of these women, and particularly Martha Ansara, that really got me going. She was not only talking about the oppression of women, she was also talking the language of sisterhood-is-powerful and that the-personal-is-political. I had come from a Labor Party background; I had come from branches that were deeply factionalised and I was very conscious that, in my view, the Labor Party in 1969 was extremely wishy-washy in its opposition to the Vietnam war. There were individual members and Members of Parliament opposed to the Vietnam war, but it seemed to me that the Labor Party at that time was not out there leading the struggle against the Vietnam war.

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So in 1969 I felt very disaffected from the Labor Party and very disaffected from a lot of the attitudes and approaches it was taking. I was in a transition phase between moving from being a school-teacher into becoming a postgraduate. I was looking for a major change in my life, I'd had a couple of long-term relationships with guys that had not worked out. Clearly I was a prime product for change to join the revolutionary movement. So by early 1970 I felt I had joined a new movement, a new revolutionary movement, which was far more revolutionary than any other aspect of the anti-war movement.

I did see Women's Liberation as part of the anti-war movement. However, I saw it as the most significant part and far superior in every possible way of thinking, because it was using a new language. It was using the language of the-personal-is-political in a way that, for me, was quite transformatory. Also, we were meeting in small groups of women, we were not looking to become a mass movement. At that time the anti-war movement was very much about mass movement politics. But Women's Liberation was about small group politics, it was about exploring oneself within a political context. It was a very exciting time for me. I remember the year 1970, in particular, as I met more women who joined us and that we very quickly became a group at 67 Glebe Point Road which was really seeking to explore a new world, with new political relationships and new personal relationships. Further, it was based entirely around the experiences of women. That was just absolutely stunning for me.

I want to focus on the new language of Women's Liberation and, in retrospect, I think it was the three Cs, as I call them, that have remained with me to this day. One was the whole concept of consciousness raising – the idea of actually using the experiences of women to formulate a political program, that for me was just absolutely wonderful. The second was the idea of not voting on decisions, the idea of consensus – the term which has now been much abused by Bob Hawke. In 1970 the idea of consensus, rather than factionalised voting, was a revelation for me and it had great potential. In other words we were more interested at that stage in the process, rather than the outcome. We were confident that the outcome would be liberation, but we had to find the means to get to liberation. So the idea of consciousness-raising and consensus was very important.

Thirdly, the idea of collective action around women was also very important. They were women's issues that we were taking collective action about – whether it was getting on the bus and only paying two-thirds the fare, or whether it was insisting on breaking into the front bar of the hotel. These ideas were clearly up-front political issues and without taking these issues on board, there could never be a revolution; there could never be liberation for the whole of society. The idea that women were actually the real leaders of a revolutionary movement at that time, was very liberating. That became the sort of driving force in my life in that period.

A number of people have asked, 'How many women were ever in Women's Liberation?' I think it was probably a very small number of women at the time, but we felt that we had a message, a group of ideas, that were touching women right across the spectrum – the spectrum of course, being Sydney. We thought that Sydney was the world, we

really had no interest about what was going on elsewhere, except for the importance of America and the fact that there were women like Martha Ansara around who were American, and others who had been in the States. I think that was very important. But more important again, we also saw ourselves as superior to the other major political groupings, like the Communist Party, the Trotskyists, Resistance, all of those groups which we saw as male groups and therefore old hat, out of date. We don't need them any more, we are the new groups of the future.

Those four areas that Suzanne identified – the personal is political; consciousness raising; sisterhood is powerful; and direct action – that combination of theory and practice was very important. By the end of the year the first Women's Liberation journal, *Mejane*, had been published, followed a year later by *Refractory Girl* which, of course, is still going today. That period, late 1969 to the end of 1972-1973, contained the really revolutionary moments in Women's Liberation. For me, when the term feminism appeared, which I think was in International Women's Year, I remember thinking this term feminism is ruining Women's Liberation. It is taking Women's Liberation out of what, I guess I would now call its Jesuit phase, into a broader feminist movement and Women's Liberation is sort of now over. So the period, late 1969 to the early 1970s, was a period when everything could begin afresh with a totally new theoretical and practical agenda.

CHAPTER FOUR: SEXUAL POLITICS: GAY AND LESBIAN RIGHTS

CRAIG JOHNSTON*

(Session Chairperson)

This session fits well in terms of the discussion of the previous session on Women's Liberation and of course, one of the legacies for the gay and lesbian rights movement of the women's movement is what we call 'coalitionism' or 'gender parity'.

I just want to make a couple of personal notes here. One is that my first involvement with the movement, which was actually before I came out, was attending what was billed as a Sex-Lib Forum held at Sydney University in 1972. The three speakers were Germaine Greer, Denis Altman and Gill Leahy, and it was at that meeting that Gay Lib, if you like, was launched as a 'splitter and wrecker' organisation from CAMP (Campaign Against Moral Persecution).

The other thing that Sue Bellamy's comments prompted me to think about was some of the geography of the Left and in particular, 67 Glebe Point Road. My memory of this is that 67 Glebe Point Road first came into the Left's history as an off-campus base for the Sydney Labor Club. For how many years I do not know, but it then got handed over or taken over by Women's Liberation, who had it for quite a period of time and then the lease on the premises was taken up virtually immediately by the Gay Liberation Front. So it is actually a very interesting trajectory of a space and the history of the use of that space reflects some of the dynamics of the movement at the time. It is now an antique shop, which is entirely appropriate!

Certainly in terms of the achievements of the Gay and Lesbian Movement over the last 30 years, questions of accommodation, commodification and how we as a movement address the hegemony of the market in terms of our politics, are very pertinent questions. The Gay and Lesbian movement is addressing the same broader issues around alliances and solidarity, trying to revive those sorts of links in, if you like, a post-September 11 world, as other movements are.

* Activist in the gay rights movement from 1973; author of *A Sydney Gaze, the making of Gay Liberation* (1999), and co-editor of *Queer City: Gay and Lesbian Politics in Sydney* (2001).

ROBYN PLAISTER*

I thought I would bring something for you to have a look at, a little show-and-tell. It is a T-shirt which is now 27 years old and has been claimed by Sue Wills for the First Ten Years Archives of the women's movement. It is something that is dear to my heart, I wear it every International Women's Day, and it actually was produced in 1974, at the end of the era we are talking about, by a member of Kate Jennings' family.

I will start by virtually explaining how I got involved in the movement. My involvement in the lesbian movement has as much to do with me as a person and my friends, as well as the times and the political scenarios that were being played out at that time. Before I recognised myself as a lesbian, I was at Sydney University; it was in the late sixties and I was involved in some of the Vietnam Moratoriums. Someone mentioned earlier about Senior Sergeant Longbottom, and I remember a wonderful scenario when I was a student and some of the boys were burning their draft cards and, of course, he was taking notes on everything. But as soon as we rushed down when we saw him – he was sitting down the bottom of the lawn at Sydney University – he got back into his car and locked all the doors. Well, somebody got sugar from the Union and put it into the petrol cap and that was it, he could not start the car. We lifted that car with him in it and carried it from the bottom of the lawn onto Parramatta Road and left it in the middle and, of course, he could not get away.

So in some ways my involvement came from my awareness in that sort of area and also just being at Sydney University and being involved in some of the Orientation Days and some of the student pranks that we got up to. Also, finding out how the police really interacted with students.

As lesbians and gay men, a lot of it is to do with our invisibility and a lot of it is to do with us recognising that we are either lesbian or gay. I guess I had got to that point, but I had not realised that there was a whole group of other people out there. There were a lot isolated in suburbia. And funnily enough it was the ABC, with Sue Wills and Gaby Antolovich doing a 'Coming Out' series after Peter Bonsall-Boone and Peter de Waal had as well, which led me to actually join CAMP NSW. However, it was in that sort of turmoil period when Sue Wills, who was then CAMP co-president with Lex Watson, was just walking out because of the difficulties in the politics between the women and the men.

I walked in after that and there were new co-presidents and there was the thought that there would be change in how the men interacted with the women and that the areas that the women were interested in, like sexism and racism, would come to the fore. We were very much involved, as women in the movement, in what men set as the agenda. Because of the fact that there was not decriminalisation of the law at that time, the great emphasis was to do with that. A lot of women felt that there was nothing for them in that particular movement, it was not looking at their particular needs.

* A radical lesbian feminist who has been involved since the early 1970s in fighting for lesbian rights through changes in legislation, government policies and processes and through community educative processes.

In general there was a lot of education that one had to do, because you were still fighting the sort of hangovers from the fifties and sixties - that homosexuals were afflicted with a psychiatric condition and required aversion therapy. So you were still dealing with people who were going through aversion therapy. There was that sort of push to change. Because male homosexuality was still a criminal act, there was a push to talk about consenting adults in private. The other prevalent thought around was that all homosexuals were criminals, partly because they had done studies in the only place they could get a whole group of homosexuals together - the jails. So there was an obvious interaction there between homosexuality and criminal minds, according to some people. In general, I guess, the community also had a fear that homosexuals were predatory and could affect the young - a thought which still raises its head today. On the other side, there was the fact that homosexuality was seen as sinful, which was more directed at males, as well as a fear that this was the end of the nuclear family because there would be total lack of procreation.

Lesbians were relatively free of being affected by a lot of those things I have just mentioned. However, they found themselves pushed into a subsidiary role and into being supportive to the men in their push for changes, mainly homosexual rights. At the same time there was a push for what I would distinguish as homosexual liberation, rather than homosexual rights, that is, changes that would bring about an upset of the nuclear family, a whole reconsideration of some of the basic tenets on which our society is based. There were also difficulties within CAMP NSW at that time. For instance, there was a disunity over initiatives like Phone a Friend (which the women mischievously called Phone a Fuck), because it was mainly run by gay males who were mainly counselling gay males and who were really wanting to support individuals psychologically, as compared to the political push.

In the early 1970s I joined the Women's Electoral Lobby and also Women's Liberation, and what I found was exactly the same thing - that the lesbian issues were not really discussed or looked at. This was partly because there were 'bigger' issues out there, whether it was abortion on demand or child care or whatever. Consequently, it was felt that if it was seen that Women's Liberation was full of lesbians, then they would not get what they wanted, especially when they were trying for gains from the government. It was interesting that a lot of the main movers and shakers and supporters, and later those who worked in the refuges and the women's health centres, were lesbians. However, they made a distinction between fighting for what they saw as the greater good, which was Women's Liberation, and looking at lesbian liberation in particular.

I guess that Women's Liberation could not recognise why the lesbians were carrying on so much about what they wanted. It was not until one of the areas that came up was lesbian mothers' custody in 1974 or '75, that there seemed to be some understanding of what the needs were for lesbians. That was quickly followed with looking at education in terms of the development of the lesbian teachers' group as well.

SUE WILLS*

In the very early 1970s I think you could not say that the Gay Liberation movement or CAMP came out of the Left in any sense. The allies in the early days were the humanists and the civil libertarians. The Left thought we were degenerate and we scared the shit out of Women's Liberation. The main targets of the organisations then were: (1) the church, who said that gays and lesbians, actually homosexuals in those days, were sinful; (2) criminal law reform and anti-discrimination legislation in particular - something we wanted as well as something we wanted removed; and (3) a large emphasis on the damage that psychiatry and psychiatrists did.

So the church group made submissions to the Church of England and the Catholics and said the Quakers were good and the rest should follow. It was the Church of England that fired Peter Bonsall-Boone after the ABC 'Chequerboard' program. We spent a great deal of time pushing and lobbying the Psychological Association, the Australian College of Psychiatrists, not only to stop offering aversion therapy which just screwed people up, but also to pass resolutions to say that homosexuality did not mean that people were automatically sick.

The fourth area that we had to deal with was ourselves and our concept of ourselves and our concept of other people. We had to spit out all of the shit that had been poured into us by the church, by the law, and by psychiatry that we were sick and degenerate. So in that sense the personal was political as well, and there was a great deal of consciousness raising.

We also became cheap after-dinner entertainment – the Lions Club, the Rotary Club, the Jewish Youth, B'nai B'rith– we would go and talk to anyone who wanted us. An additional problem was that in order to do all of those things, you had to be 'out'. There were not terribly many of us who were in a position where we could come out and therefore possibly be identified. I happened to work in a sheltered workshop called the Government Department of Sydney University at the time, which also had Lex Watson, the co-president, with me, of CAMP, and Dennis Altman. It was a very supportive department in that we could come out and feel totally supported. There were not very many people around who could do that. So we did talks and some of them were really exhilarating experiences. I once had a Rabbi tell me that in fact I could not be a lesbian, it was simply impossible, because if I was then I carried within me the seeds of the destruction of human civilisation. That made me feel really terrific; I have never felt so powerful.

We did not have any trouble keeping straights out of the gay movement, like Women's Liberation had keeping men out, except in Melbourne where I think there was a bit of a problem. Our relationship with the police was also somewhat different. The very first demonstration was outside the Liberal Party and the police were just there to keep order. In the first major demonstration down the streets of Sydney during what was then the only time that shops were open, after 5 o'clock on a Thursday night, the

* Activist in Gay and Women's Liberation movements in Sydney, 1970s-80s. She and Lex Watson were the first two co-Presidents of the Campaign against Moral Persecution (CAMP) NSW, 1972-74, before resigning over what they saw as the organisation's depoliticisation.

police were there but they were actually there to protect us from hostility from people on the streets.

We had a magazine called *Camp Ink* which was used to disseminate all these ideas and arguments. I thought I would just talk about the connection with other movements and groups. In a sense we were opportunistic because we wanted the Women's Liberation Movement and the Women's Electoral Lobby to support our ideas and we wanted the union movement to get on side when we wanted it.

One of the clearest cases was the Penny Short case, where we did eventually get union support. Penny was on a Teachers' College scholarship as a student at Macquarie University. She published a love poem in the student newspaper, *Arena*, at the end of 1973 and as a result she was called up by the Education Department for a medical examination. At the beginning of the year she had had the standard medical examination and the medical examiner, who knew she was a lesbian, had simply said, I will just report that you are in a stable relationship, I will not specify the sex of the other person. About the end of the year, she received an official notification that she was medically unfit.

There were five positive references from academic staff at Macquarie University saying that she was sane, perfectly able and perfectly competent, as well as two independent psychiatric reports to the same effect. However, senior Department of Education bureaucrats refused to discuss the matter with the NSW Teachers' Federation, which, at that time, did not push it very hard at all. They did not push it until *they* were pushed. I guess this is part of the story, the movement pushes other parts, or the gay movement pushed other parts of the Left, Right or Centre to push on our behalf, or over our issues.

Large meetings were held at Sydney University and Macquarie University early in 1974. Over 1000 staff and students made demands at Macquarie over the reinstatement of Penny's scholarship. We wanted a policy statement by the Department of Education and independent medical officers. At that meeting which was attended by the Teachers' Federation and the Labor Shadow Minister for Education, they pledged support. But the Federation representative, Michael Hourihan, indicated that the Federation would find it difficult to move with any vigour because there was insufficient evidence that the decision was made on moral grounds.

There was another rally at the University of Sydney and then a deputation and a rally outside the Department of Education down in Bridge Street, where three people were allowed in to see the Acting Director of Education, Mr Bunker – Penny Short, Julie McCrossin and me. We were escorted by three plainclothes police officers who were present at the deputation. The Minister for Education promised nothing, said he could not do anything and said it had nothing to do with homosexuality. The Teachers' Federation said it would be there, but it was not; it had promised to provide the megaphone, but it did not.

While we were inside, the Builders Labourers' Federation was outside agreeing to hold a stopwork meeting on the following Monday and to consider slapping a ban on

Macquarie University. They really should have been going at the Education Department, but they were going to do it to Macquarie University. Six months earlier they had already put a green ban on over the Menzies College incident at Macquarie [the expulsion of a student, Jeremy Fisher].

We had prepared submissions to go to MPs, the Federation, the Department of Education and NSW Committees on Discrimination and Employment. Finally, after all of that and some publicity, the Teachers' Federation Executive actually passed a resolution which condemned the Department's action terminating Penny Short's scholarship for the following reasons:

There is a great deal of evidence that Ms Short's scholarship termination was prompted solely by her open expression of her homosexuality. Federation's efforts to elicit medical reasons for the termination have been rebuffed with insistent secrecy and non-cooperation. Independent medical advice refused for vague reasons offered by the Department. Therefore the Executive demands that the Department restore the scholarship and directs that senior officers make urgent representations.

Penny Short did not get her scholarship back. But it got the Teachers' Federation off its backside to do something. It may well be that the Federation's bureaucratic structures inhibited fast movement, although from late 1973 to April 1974 does seem like a reasonable time in which even a bureaucracy can move. But the whole issue of the paranoia surrounding teachers who were homosexuals is clearly illustrated by the case. And the paranoia is still there.

KEN DAVIS*

There is a kind of disjunction about the timing here, in that the Lesbian and Gay Movement's time scale in some ways is a little bit different from the other social movements. There was certainly a period of gestation and heroic and exciting days in the early 1970s. Then again, there was a kind of watershed period of achievements and mobilisations in the late seventies and early eighties, which is a little bit out of sync with some of the other social movements. I just want to flag that there is a time line difference, I guess.

In that period in the late seventies there were really big achievements which were significant, not just for lesbians and gay men, but indeed for all the social movements and the labour movement. That is, in NSW, the repeal of the Summary Offences Law, secondly, the anti-discrimination legislation in the early eighties, and then after that came homosexual law reform and the immigration reforms.

I personally got involved in the Gay Liberation movement in 1973. Although the movement did not come out of the Left or the labour movement, some individuals like myself did. When I was 15 and in school in 1972, just before the incredible breakthrough that was the election of the Whitlam Government, I started to get involved in high school student politics and the movement against the war, in some

* Became involved in the Gay Liberation Movement during the first national Gay Pride Week in 1973; his continued activism in gay groups included Gay Solidarity in the late 1970s, which organised the first Mardi Gras.

of the demonstrations around Aboriginal rights and women's rights, and joined what was then the Socialist Youth Alliance which is now the Green Left Weekly and the Democratic Socialist Party. I was also a member of Young Labor and the Labor Party, until I parted company with all of those political groups in the late 1970s.

Some of the things that were happening in 1973 before I came out were pretty exciting. I remember a terrible conflict at May Day in 1973. The May Day Committee had tended to give the Queen of May Day, Miss May Day, to the very venerable Mary Gilmore for 12 years running. Women's Liberation had decided, quite rightly, that there was something terrible about this process of electing Miss May Day and the new movements of women and gay liberation were offended by this process. There was a boycott of May Day and a manifesto and then a successful attempt by a group of people to take the microphone from the May Day march organisers, who were associated with the pro-Moscow Socialist Party of Australia. They hauled away their microphone and their Australian flags and tried to stop it all, but in the meantime some people had made this extraordinary intervention about asserting the liberation of women and homosexuals. That was an electrifying moment.

I also remember as a schoolboy getting hippie publications like *Playguy* and coming across the manifesto, I think by Martha Shelley, which had words like, "we are your best fantasies and your worst nightmares made flesh". You have to understand how incredibly silenced we were at that time as lesbians and gay men, particularly young ones. The weight of the pathologising of us was so enormous, not only in terms of psychiatry, because the volume of aversion therapy and brain operations that was occurring in Sydney specifically right up into the early seventies, was very high. There was also the daily feeling of pathology because we were either not masculine enough or not feminine enough. So this process of coming out that a lot of us went through in 1972 and 1973 was electrifying and exciting and felt very on the edge.

I came out after a year of being involved in socialist politics, during Gay Pride Week in 1973, which was the first national mobilisation of lesbians and gay men. It was quite traumatic. There were a lot of very small demonstrations during the week and I remember being in Martin Place dressed in my school uniform and it was very scary. A lot of people were arrested in those small demonstrations, although not necessarily held for a long while. There was a certain vibrancy though and I remember there was still stuff about psychiatry happening.

I don't know if anyone remembers the name Harry Bailey, but he had been doing a whole lot of operations on lesbian brains in St Luke's. So people had lambs' brains and they set up a stall outside his Macquarie Street office and after a bit of a demonstration trying to sell these homosexual brains for 20 cents, they went and ground them into his shagpile carpet. Then Gay Pride Week had a march on the Saturday morning and there were 18 very violent arrests and I found that very traumatic, as did a lot of people. I remember going back to school on the Monday and realising that I was now living in a completely different world from the people around me in school.

I started to get involved in Gay Liberation and there were meetings of women and men at Australia Street, which was like a commune, where all the men were called Terry. Just

prior to that there had been a movement of lesbians where everyone adopted the name Egg or O'Wheel because they needed rounded sort of names, and there had been a sort of lesbian migration to Tasmania. There was Gay Pride Week and then there were the Australia Street meetings and then also at 33A Glebe Point Road. There was an enormous amount of tension between us in Gay Liberation and the people in the bar scene. I don't know what it was like for lesbians but, particularly for men, there was enormous dislocation between us as political activists and people who were in what was then the small commercial scene.

At the time though, politics was everywhere. At the same time as Gay Pride Week was happening, we were having a demonstration which was probably called by the Communist Party, about solidarity with the Allende Government in Chile. We all rolled up for the demonstration on the very day that the Government was overthrown and Allende was killed. So there was a tremendous intersection between a whole lot of issues, whether we liked it or not.

I just want to mention a couple of other things. Humour was very important and I think, more than the other social movements, the lesbian movement and the gay movement brought a humourous style to politics. That was evident in the early demonstrations. One of the things I remember very much from 1972 before I was out, was David Widdup running for the then Prime Minister, Billy McMahon's seat in Lowe. Billy McMahon had this image as a kind of deaf person (like our current Prime Minister), and it was widely believed he wore frocks at home. The slogans were 'Vote for a Homosexual that Lives in the Area' (as against the Prime Minister who didn't) and 'I've Got My Eyes on Billy's Seat'.

So there was a certain flair that was already evident that came to be very useful because in 1973, the Festival of Light was set up. I don't know if people can remember, but the Festival of Light then was not some sort of horrible extreme thing controlled by the Nile family. When it was originally set up it was a united front of almost every religious organisation in the country, and their original rally in 1973 had something like 35,000 people at it. So it was actually quite scary. But that humour that we had, from I don't know where, "camp" I suppose, was actually very useful for us in the two or three decade long struggle against the Christian Right.

I have to say that Marxism was actually very important for me, I would not have been able to come out when I did if I had not become a Marxist. Because Marxism taught me that whatever was going on was not a personal pathology, that families and gender and our sexual lives were socially constructed and it was not a question of personal blame. So it was quite important. The movement had alliances with the labour movement – Sue talked about the BLF with Jeremy Fisher's case and then later with Penny Short's case. There were also incidences in both parts [i.e. the Seamen's Union of Australia, and the Waterside Workers' Federation] of what is now the Maritime Union of Australia, where they defended gay members from persecution.

There were also Left parties which adopted gay rights or to an extent, gay liberation and lesbian liberation in 1970, which was very daring at that time. I remember that *Direct Action* said, much to my surprise, this is a movement of the most oppressed. I

don't know that I agreed with it then, and I don't agree with it now, but it was pretty daring. It was an extraordinary validation for something that even I felt was not a serious political question, was not something that you could take to workers without getting laughed at. So there was a daringness by some of the Left parties.

You have to remember, though, that some Left parties were extremely hostile. That is, the Socialist Labor League which came from Gerry Healy and Vancssa Redgrave in Britain, the Maoists and a couple of other groups, and certainly the Socialist Party at the time which is now the Communist Party, were extremely hostile to lesbians and gay men to the point of frequent threats of violence. So you could not be at a conference like this without some guy coming from the CPA M-L [Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist)] or the Socialist Labor League and saying things like, 'I'm going to cut your toes off unless you stop doing what you're doing'.

So the Left was really quite divided and we kind of forget about that, because we forget about some of the really bizarrely bad things that some of our colleagues did. There was a problem though, that the Left only understood us in terms of the struggle for democratic rights. They did not understand most of what we wanted to say about liberationist politics, and I am not sure they still do. Also there was a consistent problem about the autonomy of our movement. There was one step to understand what the Women's Liberation movement was saying about autonomy; it was actually a bit harder for them, in some ways, to understand the need for an autonomous Gay and Lesbian movement, or at the time, gay movement. It was even more difficult for many on the Left to understand gay identity and lesbian identity – two different questions – but I remember fighting for that identity politics and, in a sense, I still do, because I think it was a big gain.

Towards the end of the period the alliance that we had with the student movement became crucial and the years following, in the mid-seventies, were quite a difficult period, both for the lesbian movement and for what remained of the Gay Liberation movement. They were not a high point and had we not had an alliance with the broad student movement, it would have been extremely difficult to go on.

SHANE OSTENFELD*

I have a three-part presentation. Firstly, I want to focus on the development of the Gay Liberation Movement; secondly, the employment discrimination that resulted from coming out; and thirdly, the overtures from the gay movement to the labour movement for help with social change.

First, activists engaged in the race debate in the early 1960s provided a bridgehead for the movements representing other disadvantaged groups. Students were another group calling for radical change in the 1960s. Much of the early activity of the Women's Liberation Movement took place on university campuses. The expanded higher education sector also provided a focus for the moratorium movement. Intellectual

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transformations were also taking place in the academies leading to developments in critical theory.

In addition an economic boom facilitated the development of homosexual communities in urban centres. A range of private clubs now began to appear and make up a 'scene'. For clubs, Kings Cross was a favoured location due to the high population density of its surrounding inner-city suburbs. Oxford Street became the definite focus for gay entertainment in 1969 when Ivy's Birdcage opened at Taylor Square.

When law reform took place in Britain in 1967, Bill Hayden made a call in the Parliament for the Australian States to follow suit. The Humanist Society of NSW supported this call in early 1969. Buoyed by these calls for reform and other calls from the Presbyterian Church for example, the Homosexual Law Reform Society of the A.C.T. emerged in 1969 with heterosexual spokespeople. The Australian Lesbian Movement formed in Melbourne at this time with a non-lesbian woman as its spokesperson.

The Stonewall Inn riots occurred in New York City in 1969. They acted as a catalyst that galvanised gay communities around the world into a social movement. In Australia the Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP) was formed in 1970. The call from Stonewall was a 'coming out' cry. John Ware and Christabel Poll, the convenors of CAMP, responded. Both agreed to be interviewed and photographed for a feature article in *The Australian* in 1970.

In 1972 Sue Wills, Gaby Antolovich, Peter de Waal and Peter Bonsall-Boone appeared on behalf of CAMP on the ABC program, 'Chequerboard'. Bonsall-Boone, Secretary of St. Clement's Anglican Church at Mosman, was asked to resign from that position as a result of his participation. After refusing he was sacked.

Further victimisation followed. In 1974 Jeremy Fisher was expelled from Robert Menzies residential college at Macquarie University. The Builders Labourers' Federation drew attention to this case in the media through protests and demonstrations, but a university committee decided that the incident did not warrant action against the college. At the same university in 1974 Penny Short lost her trainee teacher's scholarship after her 'lesbian love poem' was published in the student newspaper.

Gay and lesbian student activists mobilised around the Fisher, Short and Bonsall-Boone cases. The initiative was taken by the Australian Union of Students (AUS) when it decided to organise a National Homosexual Conference. This first National Conference took place at the Melbourne University Union in August 1975 with over 700 people. Employment issues were a focal point for the conference. The Melbourne Gay Teachers Group formed. A few weeks later an inaugural meeting of a NSW Gay Teachers Group was called. This resulted from the sacking of Mike Clohesy, dismissed from the Marist Brothers High School at Eastwood after coming out on television representing CAMP on 'A Current Affair'.

The Bonsall-Boone and Clohesy cases rallied the emergent Gay Liberation movement. CAMP and Gay Lib together organised the demonstration to protest the Bonsall-

Boone sacking. A broad coalition of groups worked together in Victoria to protest the Clohesy dismissal.

Apart from discriminatory sackings, institutional discrimination included promotional barriers in clerical employment in the public service on security grounds, and the regulations suspending teachers who faced criminal charges. Social welfare workers faced discrimination in the religion-dominated welfare arena. So activities within the social welfare, public sector and teacher unions provided a focal point for educative and policy formation activities within the broader workers' movement.

Notwithstanding some influence of the 'New Left' within the Administrative and Clerical Officers' Association (ACOA), and attempts from the mid-1970s to overcome discriminatory employment practices in the Federal public service, through vehicles such as the ACTU Working Women's Charter, a conservative national leadership stopped the adoption of progressive anti-discrimination policies until 1980.

The humanism of teachers' unions was reflected in early support for gay members. In the oppressive climate of the 1950s and 1960s, many instances of police entrapment of homosexual teachers were brought to the NSW Teachers' Federation. The Federation solicitor was wise to the police tactics. This brought about some success in court but the frequency of cases led to the issue of police harassment of teachers being raised at executive. The Federation determined to act with discretion. They advised teachers of the retention by the union of legal assistance, if required. This discretion continued into the 1970s, causing some frustration on the part of student activists. At the Penny Short demonstration outside the Department of Education, representatives of the NSW Teachers' Federation were 'conspicuous by their absence'.

However, some limited union support was forthcoming in relation to the Mike Clohesy case. The Independent Teachers' Association asked that Clohesy use the union's solicitor and barrister. The Annual General Meeting of the union, 'after some unexpected and vociferous support for Mike's complaint of restriction of choice', referred the matter back to Executive for re-consideration. The Executive reiterated their prior offer, whereupon Clohesy conferred with his own solicitor and decided to take up the offer. At this stage the union declared that in its opinion the application for reinstatement had been delayed too long.

The Clohesy case and the inability of unions to support lesbian and gay members in the absence of policy brought about the beginnings of such policy development. In 1976 the Annual General Meeting of the Victorian Secondary Teachers' Association (VSTA) adopted an 'abolition of sexism motion'. An 'Open Committee on Homosexuality' was formed within the union as a result.

Social workers, as in the case of teachers, were subject to an association between pedophilia and homosexuality. The Melbourne City Mission case, involving a gay social worker, was one of the earliest cases of 'coming out' discrimination to hit the gay and lesbian movement. This case, along with an infusion of activists from the Australian Union of Students, promoted the development of policies of support of lesbian and

gay members, leading to support from the Australian Social Welfare Union (ASWU) for the first Australian peak union anti-discrimination policy, that of the Council of Government Employee Organisations (CAGEO) in 1977. This was followed within the ASWU by the adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination policies by 1978.

Public servants in the Federal sphere, teachers, and social welfare workers were well aware, through experience, of the discrimination faced by lesbians and gays in these occupations. When lesbian and gay workers in these occupations reached out to their unions this was on the basis of discrimination in employment as a result of coming out in the early 1970s. Support, particularly in the case of teachers, was facilitated by long-term activism by women in these unions over equity issues. Gay and lesbian rights were subsumed within anti-sexism programs. Right wing influence in the public sector union and in some teacher unions held up policy development for some years. It was not until the late 1970s and into the 1980s that supportive national policies in these unions were achieved. By this time the Left had consolidated leadership of the teacher and public sector unions.

CHAPTER FIVE: ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS and CIVIL RIGHTS

BRIAN AARONS*

(Session Chairperson)

A few comments to open up discussion of the Freedom Ride. Obviously this is not a conference to go into the detailed history of the relationship between the labour movement and the Aboriginal movement. However, it should be noted that the labour movement as a whole fully supported the White Australia policy from day one and did nothing to oppose the two items in the Constitution which the 1967 referendum was about. One of these was that the Constitution specifically excluded the Commonwealth from having power to make laws for Aboriginal people (Torres Strait Islander people were not even recognised at that time).

However, there is a section of the labour movement, mainly on the left, which has a quite honourable tradition in regard to support for Aboriginal people and their rights. There was the role of Don McLeod in the great walk-off of Aboriginal people in the 1940s, for example. Also, when the Gurindji strike and walk-off occurred on August 22, 1966, many in the left of the union movement supported the Gurindji people's struggles and later, in a revival of that campaign in the early 1970s, the Save The Gurindji campaign, many in the labour movement were involved. And, of course, similar sections of the labour movement actively supported the decade long campaign for the 1967 referendum.

The Freedom Ride was somewhat different in the sense that it was conceived at Sydney University, out of a demonstration on American Independence Day in July 1964 outside the U.S. Embassy, which was against what was happening to the black civil rights movement in the United States at that time. The police waded in, in Margaret Street where the U.S. Consulate was then, and about 60 people were arrested. At a subsequent meeting in the Old Geology lecture theatre at Sydney University, the issue was raised that we are putting together a campaign of defence over demonstrations about civil rights in the United States of America, but what about our own Aboriginal people here and the similar treatment they were suffering. Charlie Perkins and a group of us got together and Student Action for Aborigines was formed.

At that time, we did not use the words, Freedom Ride, I think that was used by the media later, but the idea was to have a bus tour up through the whole north-west and down the coast of NSW, going to Aboriginal communities, drawing attention to inequities such as the fact that an Aboriginal ex-serviceman called Harry Hall was not allowed into the Walgett RSL, that Aboriginal children were not allowed into the Moree swimming pool except on certain occasions, and so on.

* Sydney University student in the 1965 Freedom Ride bus tour through northern New South Wales; continuing active supporter of Aboriginal rights issues; currently works in reconciliation area.

The trip was also planned to take some sort of a survey of the actual living conditions of Aboriginal people. I must say that even for those of us who had in our minds some ideological sense of the dreadful living conditions and oppression of Aboriginal people, it was an eye-opener to actually see it on the ground. I think it changed many of us for all time. As did the events at the Moree swimming pool the second time around, which is the only time that I have seen the naked and hateful racism of the ordinary average person in the street. Police are one thing and what happened in the anti-apartheid demonstrations is another, but the sort of racism of the average ordinary person in Moree on that particular day was a real eye-opener.

It is important to remember that on the Freedom Ride itself, there were about 30 participants and it was a very broad coalition of students. A number of us were quite political and there were a few members of the Eureka Youth League as it was then. There was also Jim Spigelman who is now Chief Justice of the NSW Supreme Court, who was a well-known ALP activist. We regarded him as a right-winger but on the Freedom Ride he was magnificent. And, of course, Charlie Perkins, who had no particular politics vis-à-vis the labour movement, in fact he was regarded by some people on the left as having no politics other than his interest in the Aboriginal movement. But at that time and on that Freedom Ride, Charlie Perkins was an inspiration. He was about 10 years older than the rest of us and he was a magnificent passionate speaker at each of the towns that we went to, in speaking both to the whites and the Aboriginal people in those towns and appearing on the media.

There were young humanists and young Christians, there was a very broad array of people who came together on that bus trip. And, of course, there was a much wider support movement of other people, students at Sydney University, there must have been upwards of 200 or more who took part in organising the infrastructure and so on.

DULCIE FLOWER*

I bring you greetings and good wishes from Dr Faith Bandler, who is unable to be with us today.

My talk is to be on FCAATSI's (Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders) Campaign leading to the 1967 referendum. But firstly, I would like to mention that there was a film made of that Freedom Ride and those people certainly went through some hair-raising moments. Their lives were actually threatened at one stage, a number of times I think, people driving at them. The film is really worth seeing and it brings back the horror of just exactly what happened to the young people who were so brave and who formed a catalyst to create an awareness of the living conditions of Aboriginal people at that particular point of time.

The areas they visited were extremely racist. I think you really had to live there and you had to be there to know what it was like to have people turn away from you because of the colour of your skin, to be denied entry to various places, to be ushered to the

* Activist in campaign by the Federal Council for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), leading to the successful 1967 Referendum.

front rows of the theatre and there was definitely a roped-off section, whites in the back and blacks in front, to be treated with suspicion if you went into a shop because you might steal something and not pay for it. There just seemed to be the feeling that if you got too close to black people, the colour might rub off, I think that was what it was, but I don't know.

For a long time the majority of Aboriginal people were put on reserves or areas of Crown land gazetted as reserves right round this country. They were just forcibly taken off their land and placed into these roped off areas, very much like the migrant concentration camps that we have now. Just prior to the State Governments taking over responsibility for Aboriginal people, their care was in the hands of churches who did their best, there were some very dedicated people. The only thing wrong there was that people had to become Christian and forget about their own languages, their own customs and culture and ceremonies.

When the States took over, reserve managers were installed. A lot of these people came in from South Africa, possibly many of them meant well, but somehow they got caught up in becoming dictators. So the lives of the people consisted of living under legislation, Special Acts, which determined their lives. All Aborigines came under the control of a Protector, they were told where to live and where to work, they received a pittance for the work they did and received food, shelter and clothing to a value determined by the Protector and the employer. They were also told when to get married and to whom.

The people did not manage their own money, this was supposedly placed in trust specifically for the members of the Stolen Generation. Some of it went to fund maintenance of the missions and reserves and some went into consolidated revenue on the deaths of the people, as in some States the mentally insane and Aborigines were not allowed to make wills. We know that in the Far North police were designated as Aboriginal Protectors. And eventually when the mothers were able to receive their Child Endowment as it was called then, a lot of the money went into the pockets of police and various other Protectors instead of being given to the people. Under the legislation Aborigines were not allowed to own property so many of the estates went into consolidated revenue via the Commonwealth Bank. Aborigines who shopped in the towns were able to make their choice of goods in exchange for notes written by reserve managers to the traders. Nobody except the trader and the reserve manager knew what price was actually paid.

The State boundaries went through Aboriginal land and you had families divided – you had one part of the family, for example, in Queensland under Queensland legislation and their brothers and sisters in the northern part of NSW under NSW legislation. And never the twain shall meet. They had to get permission to move, to visit, as well as to leave and enter the reserves. Rations were allocated to the families, supposedly on the basis of need; tea, flour, salt, that kind of thing, but they were sometimes used as a means of reward and punishment, depending on the mood of the reserve manager. So if the manager didn't like the look of somebody who maybe had spoken back when they should not have or didn't bow when they should have, their rations would be curtailed.

We were just lucky that some of the Aboriginal people had the determination to better the conditions and used to come off the reserves in the middle of the night and go to some really good people who helped – I am thinking of some of the teachers in country areas. They would be driven down to Sydney from time to time to meet up with Aboriginal people there. So campaigns would be sort of done that way. Just a little note about education - in NSW Aboriginal children were not educated under the auspices of the State, but rather the reserve manager's wife or the missionary's wife would teach the children primary school subjects.

So this is just painting the picture of what it was like to be an Aboriginal person in NSW, right up until the legislation was repealed in 1972. Now, do not forget that Aboriginal people have only been free people here since the legislation was enacted in 1973. That is only 28 years; people have only enjoyed freedom in this state for the last 28 years. So all things taken, I think that miracles have occurred.

Getting back to changing the Constitution. Actually the campaign started back in 1957. People like Dr Dugald, Lady Jessie Street and, I believe, the late Dr Evatt, called welfare people together and said that there had to be a change in the Constitution of the country to enable the Commonwealth to make special laws for Aboriginal people. The petition asked for two clauses to be altered. One was Section 51, Clause 26, which stated: 'The Parliament shall, subject to the Constitution, have powers to make laws for the order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to the people of any race other than the Aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws.' And the other, Section 127, stated: 'In reckoning the number of people of the Commonwealth or of a State, or any other part of the Commonwealth, Aboriginal and natives shall not be counted.' The referendum would request the abolition of the words, 'other than the Aboriginal race' in Section 51, and the elimination of Section 127.

It was Lady Jessie Street who penned the original petition, which I think is in the Mitchell Library. Hundreds of letters seeking support had been sent to service clubs, unions, schools, universities and churches. Some of the organisations did not respond, others said they supported charities which helped Aborigines, but balked at participating in political activity. The old Aboriginal Australian Fellowship, a NSW-based forerunner to FCAATSI, became involved in fund-raising and the distribution of petitions nationally to gather signatures. In one year thousands of signatures had been gathered, so as the task grew it became necessary for the national body to take over.

At the fourth Annual Conference of FCAATSI in 1962 the petition was launched again and speakers such as Gough Whitlam, Dame Mary Gilmore, the Reverend Alan Walker and other prominent citizens added their voices to the call for a referendum. Press statements were released, journalists became interested and editorials began to appear about the need to change conditions for Aborigines. A National Campaign Committee was set up and State Secretaries of FCAATSI took over organising the campaigns within the various states.

In spite of the increased support from the public, the Commonwealth Government had not yet agreed. So in 1965 extra energy was put into lobbying and presenting petitions

in the Parliament and the names of people read like a Labor *Who's Who*. I shouldn't really start naming names, but you cannot go past people like Gordon Bryant, Les Johnston, Barry Cohen, Mr Beazley the elder and various other people.

Prime Minister Menzies met with a delegation of Aborigines who convinced him of the need to change the Constitution. He was pretty scathing; he said to get the people to move on a referendum is a herculean task, you have to be Hercules to make it work. The classic story was that he offered the delegation members a drink and Kath Walker said, Prime Minister, if you were in Queensland and offered me a drink, you would end up in gaol. All of a sudden he realised that under that legislation you would be gaoled for giving me a drink. And it was just that simple act which convinced him of the need to agree.

After Menzies resigned, Harold Holt came in and he planned to exclude Section 51. I am just telling you this because we all take it for granted now, but there was the biggest struggle that you could think of, it was just incredible. The organisations affiliated with FCAATSI, including churches, trade unions, ABSCHOL, student and women's groups, groups of Aborigines and members of the public, were all asked to send objections and letters of protest to Holt in the strongest possible terms. Obviously it worked and obviously they did, with the result that he changed his mind. Also, as I said before, there were Labor Party Senators and Members of the House of Representatives who supported the campaign and eventually were able to get the support of Labor Caucus. So the campaign continued. Once it was decided to hold a referendum, the campaign was stepped up and it became a Vote Yes campaign.

I would like to close with an acknowledgement for the thousands of people who gave of their time and their money, and in those days there wasn't much money around and certainly there were no professional organisations like there are now. So donations of books of stamps were really welcome, as were reams of paper, the use of somebody's old Gestetner machine, donations of petrol and stuff like that. This is how the campaigns were waged. I think it was an era when this united all sections of the community and everybody threw their efforts in, with the effect that the referendum was passed.

Just one final note, a classic. In Faith Bandler's book, *Turning The Tide* (1989), there is a photo of a poster which was printed in *The Australian* in 1969, seeking money for FCAATSI and she had asked 900 companies for a donation. And somebody made up this poster out of the donations, which consisted of a cheque for \$2, a cheque for \$3, a cheque for \$5, some sugar and some frankfurts. So, although Australia had voted Yes we want the Constitution changed, although people had done that, it came down to the crunch of really saying, well look, we want this change, we want this. There is still a long way to go, we are still struggling, over 30 years later. It is going to be up to the next generation. We think that each generation has its cross to bear or its load to carry and we can only take things so far.

LESTER BOSTOCK*

I will start by saying that when Dulcie talked about the referendum and the lead up to it, one of the things that came to my mind is that the referendum itself and whatever work it was, was the real watershed for Aboriginal rights in this country. It was from there, from that period, that Aboriginal freedom as we know it today, really started.

Because during those days, living on Aboriginal reserves, you could not move in and out of town without permission, you could not move on and off the reserve without permission, and if you questioned the manager of the reserve at any time you were sent away to another reserve. They were very much like penal colonies in themselves and some of them were very much like concentration camps. I remember that the reserve that I came from on the North Coast of New South Wales had a big wire fence around it and the manager's house was right next to the front gate. You had to report to the manager before you walked on or off the reserve. You were allowed to go into the movie house in town only on a Friday night and when you got there, you had to wait till the lights went out before they allowed you into the theatre. And then you had to leave before the lights came up because they did not want to see that there were Aboriginal people in the theatre.

When I started thinking about what we do and how we do it, we had the referendum, there was FCAATSI and there was Tranby College. Tranby was a good training ground for a lot of young Aboriginal people of that time, especially in the late 1960s. A lot of the young people who were at Tranby when I was there, including Gary Foley, Paul Coe and a lot of other people, had come through Tranby and got a lot of their training in that area.

Let us look at what came after the referendum and the development of some of the Aboriginal organisations. There was the re-formation in the mid-1960s of the Aboriginal Progressive Association, which Dulcie and I were involved with. Then the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs which I was involved with, at one time I was on the Committee. Then there were the Aboriginal Legal Service, Murrawina, the Aboriginal housing company in Redfern, the Aboriginal Children's Service and the Black Theatre. All of those came about for one reason or another.

There was one organisation which is not mentioned much these days when we look at the history of the black movement in this country, and that was the National Tribal Council, which was an organisation of young people. There were people like Denis Walker, Gary Foley, Naomi Mayers, Gordon Briscoe, and the elder leaders of the Tribal Council at that time were Kath Walker and Doug Nicholls. One of the things the Tribal Council did in the late 1960s, was that it had written quite a number of documents and manifestos and ideas and policies of what will be done and some of those policies led to the development of the Aboriginal Legal Services and of the Aboriginal Medical Services. The Children's Services also came out of that. The development of black schools

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came out of that period. A lot of what happened, what we all take for granted today, came out of these early organisations in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Another organisation that came about which we don't talk about much these days, was the Aboriginal Panther Party, which took its lead from the Panther Party and the Black Panthers in America, and it was also connected with the Polynesian Panthers in New Zealand. A lot of the people who were involved in the Panther Party were some of the main players in the Tent Embassy.

So when we look back at that, we tend to forget a lot of this early development, because we are all going on doing other things and being involved in other things. Very little from an Aboriginal perspective has been documented from that era. Nothing has been documented about the foundations of the Medical Service, or Legal Service, or the Black Theatre. We were too busy doing it to be bothered about documenting it. The other thing is that none of us knew how to write in the way that it would broaden the minds of other people, get other people involved.

My own personal background is that I have had very little formal education, I left school when I was 13, went to a mission school and couldn't read and write until I went to Tranby when I was in my twenties. A whole lot of people of my generation, especially a lot of Aboriginal people, had those same experiences. So documenting the issues and the development was something we didn't think about, we were too busy doing it.

In thinking about the Tent Embassy, I remember when the call came out, when they kicked them off the first time. I think one of the things they found was a clause in the law that the land the Tent Embassy was sitting on was Crown land, and the Aboriginal people had a right to Crown land. That was how they got around that. What happened was that in the middle of the night, the Federal Parliament quickly got through a midnight hearing to change the law about the Crown Land Act. That was how they got people off the Embassy, off the front lawn at Parliament House. Those types of things were happening and those things were going on. And we look at that formation period of what we have all gone through and what has happened and what is the benefit of that today and you can look around you and see what the benefit of that is.

I think in a sense none of us really knew what we were doing. All we knew was that there was something wrong and we just had to do something about it. And that was it. I went on later and got involved with setting up the Aboriginal Black Theatre in Redfern. In doing that we started looking around for Aboriginal stories. We had started looking at black American plays, but when we started trying to read them, we could not understand a word of what they were saying, because they were using American street jargon. We had our own street jargon in Redfern. So we started re-writing a lot of stuff and everyone just sat around and said, well what will we do and we started telling each other our own personal stories. That is how the Black Theatre movement started, by just telling our own stories and starting to put those down and put them on stage and put them into plays. I think the first public performance of Black Theatre was on the front lawns of the Tent Embassy in 1971. We need to be reminded of those things from time to time.

A lot has come out about the services and what is happening in the Aboriginal community. But one thing I always get really concerned about is how our young people today do not seem to know a lot of that history and a lot of those stories. About 9 or 10 years ago I was running some courses on video training for young Aboriginal people, teaching them video production, and one of the things I found was that a lot of them were the children of people who had gone through that late 1960s-early 1970s period and they did not want to know about what their parents went through. I had arranged for some old fellows to tell some stories and had some speakers, but those young kids just did not want to know what their parents had gone through. They had become so indoctrinated by the white system that they denied their own Aboriginality, their own life styles, of what they were doing.

That is one of the things that really worried me at the time and I think it is something that we need to be thinking about at all times. We need to be telling our stories because our people are dying very quickly. Charlie Perkins is gone, Kath Walker is gone, Jack Davis is gone, Cecil Patten is gone, a lot of those people are dead now. So we need to be getting down and talking more and more in sessions like this, but also out to a broader community, of what we had all gone through at that time and passing on the stories, especially to our children and our younger generation.

CHAPTER SIX: THE ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

AUDREY McDONALD*

(Session Chairperson)

In opening this session I would like to say that the period under review was challenging for those who were involved in the anti-apartheid movement. One of the high points would have been the protests against the South African sporting teams. In general I would characterise the period as pretty hard work, but then that set the basis or the ground work for the actions that took place in the 1980s and 1990s, with the establishment of the African National Congress office here in 1983 and in the very exciting period leading up to democratic government being established in South Africa. Many of us were involved and even though difficult, it was quite an interesting period. Contributions in the book edited by Penny O'Donnell and Lynette Simons, *Australians Against Racism* (1995), bear this out.

In thinking about these opening remarks, I thought about the involvement of the various organisations such as the unions, the Peace Council, the Union of Australian Women and other organisations which had international links. It was at those meetings of world bodies that we were able to establish contact with activists from South Africa and those South Africans living in exile, which I think enabled us to have some kind of coordination in Australia to participate in the world-wide campaigns against apartheid.

* Longtime left activist in the Union of Australian Women, the Anti-Apartheid Movement and other progressive issues.

MEREDITH BURGMANN*

I really enjoyed the sessions yesterday where people who I had otherwise known as serious left-wingers discussed how they got to a certain personal position and it was really liberating to discover that they did not know what they were doing either. So I am also going to approach my 10 minutes from a bit of a personal level.

How did I get to be where I was in 1971? I was a nice, middle-class schoolgirl, went to school on the North Shore and didn't talk to a Catholic until I was 18. When I arrived at university and discovered there were Catholics there, I literally had never been to a social event or spoken to a Catholic before. When I arrived at Sydney University in 1966, I met Bob Scribner who was a Catholic intellectual in the History Department at the time. Meeting Bob and through him, people like John Iremonger and other radical Catholics at the time, was very important to me and it was probably part of my radicalisation. But it was really the war in Vietnam and the fact that we were sending people to kill people in another country that no-one seemed to know very much about, that just seemed to be very wrong.

Through my anti-Vietnam activity I obviously became involved in other issues and decided I was a socialist. I got involved in the Gurindji demonstrations, Papua New Guinea - I remember freedom for New Guinea was a big issue at the time – and the beginnings of the women's movement, which was a very exhilarating time. I also had read books about South Africa like Alan Paton's *Cry The Beloved Country* and Luthuli's *Let My People Go*. I knew about the existence of SADAF (the South Africa Defence and Aid Fund) and the work of people like John and Margaret Brink and I certainly was very aware of the apartheid issue.

Towards the end of 1969 the South African Minister for Trade, a man called Haak, came to Australia. You can imagine what the slogan was, we just marched around town yelling 'Fark Haak'. A group of us came together to demonstrate against this Minister when he came. I still remember the meeting which was attended by Peter McGregor, Denis Freney, myself and a number of others, including, I think, some trade union people. We decided to start a group called the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Peter, Denis and I were the co-convenors and we quite deliberately set ourselves up to be the maddies.

I have always believed in a two-prong, or even a three-prong attack to problems you have – a very respectable group and a very, very respectable group, but you also have the people who are prepared to attract the odium, and we were definitely the group who saw ourselves as attracting the odium. CARIS (the Campaign Against Racism in Sport) was the very respectable group and I suspect the legal intellectuals like Garth Nettheim saw themselves as the very very respectable group. But I must say we all worked together incredibly well; the very respectable people put up with us remarkably well.

Our first terrorist activity was to break up the swimming trials – they were choosing an Australian team to go to South Africa and it was at Drummoyne Swimming Pool.

* Co-convenor of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Sydney and campaigner against the 1971 Springboks tour of Australia.

If you have ever seen Drummoyne Swimming Pool, you will know that a well-aimed dye-bomb thrown from the bridge can actually get into the pool, which is what we did. It was remarkable, you could see this black dye spreading through the pool as Shane Gould was powering her way to the end. It was a wonderful sight. In fact, we had to drag people back into the car because we had to get away. But they were just standing there going Oh Wow, look at that. They had to call off the meet because the swimmers could not see the end of the pool. It was our first very successful attack. We went back to the Forth and Clyde and when the police came there to arrest us (they had followed our car), we all hid in the toilet. That was our first terrorist activity and really energised us.

We then had demonstrations against the women basketballers and the surf lifesavers. That became quite a big issue. The Sutherland Council under Arthur Gietzelt refused to allow the South Africans onto Cronulla beach, which was the first time a government instrumentality had refused the South Africans anything. We had a little sort of kamikaze raid on that too and we stopped the march-past, although we were lying underneath them at this stage and they just walked over us. It was another remarkable sight. We followed the surf lifesavers down to Wollongong and that was when I realised that Wollongong was a different place because our loud-speaker broke down and Merv Nixon, the South Coast Labor Council Secretary, just said, 'Don't worry Meredith, we'll borrow the police one'. And he did.

We were very influenced by the tactics of the British Stop the Tour movement under Peter Hain, who is now a senior minister in the Blair Government. He had led that campaign in Britain, which had been pretty successful. We brought him out to Australia to tour as the Springboks were going around and that was our little international effort. I started a correspondence with Don Bradman, which I really think should be published at some stage. I have recently found the letters, there are five left. He started writing to me because he was chair of the Cricket Board and it was really the cricket tour that we were trying to stop, because we knew we probably could not stop the football tour. But we thought we could stop the cricket tour which was to happen six months later.

I started to meet the real heroes, the seven Rugby Union Internationals who refused to play the Springboks. Just recently we held a Heroes Dinner for them on the thirtieth anniversary of the Sydney match and the seven of them all made wonderful speeches. They have remained the remarkable men they were.

We had debates with Federal Labor Party politicians. At the time, and I looked through the Hansard, there were only two politicians that had shown any interest in the apartheid issue at all. One was Barry Cohen and the other was Gough Whitlam; they were the ones who had made speeches about it. Barry Cohen was unhappy with our tactics, but was obviously very supportive of our aim. We had to continually justify why we were bringing politics into sport. It just seems now, looking back, how would you have to justify that, when it was the South Africans who were refusing to allow blacks into the team?

That was the big issue – why are you bringing politics into sport? The Australian press kept arguing, why aren't you cleaning up your own backyard, that is, why aren't you

worrying about our Aborigines? Which is what their continual argument was. It was terrific during that campaign to be able to say, well why don't you talk to them, because of course there were a large number of young Aboriginal activists very involved in the campaign too – Gary Williams, Gary Foley, Lyn Craigie, Isabel Coe, Paul Coe, Billy Craigie, Bob and Sol Bellear, Tony Koori. And that was terrific because then the press had to go off and interview the Aboriginal activists to show that they (the press) were not just opposing us because we were talking about South Africa.

I had already been arrested four or five times during the lead-up to the Springboks arriving, so I used to have to wear these really hideous disguises. I did get arrested at the first game; my sister Verity and I were two of the four that got onto the ground. One of my great memories is of the rocket launching affair from Gary Williams' house in Ebley Street. It was just absolute coincidence that the Springboks were staying at the Squire Inn Motel which was half a block from Gary's house. Our lead-up demos had raised the issue. Why were the demos so big? I think the time had come, but you have to ask yourself, why did it take the New Zealanders ten years later before they had the same experience?

We were very thrilled when in September of that year, after the actual campaign, Bradman made the statement that the South African cricketers would not come until they stopped racially selecting the team. We continued our campaign after the Springboks left. We concentrated on individual South Africans who came out who had expressed support for the apartheid regime, such as Gary Player. We gave him such a terrible time that he eventually stopped coming, especially to Sydney.

We continued the activity through the 1970s in an organisation called the Southern Africa Liberation Centre, which was also very involved with Mozambique, Angola and especially, Zimbabwe. That was under the influence of a person who many of you know, Sekai Holland, who is now very involved with the opposition in Zimbabwe.

Finally, one of the great things for me arising out of the Springboks campaign was getting back involved with the Aboriginal activists and then being involved with Aboriginal rights issues after that.

PETER MCGREGOR*

I would like to begin by acknowledging absent friends who played a major role in anti-apartheid activities. I would certainly like to pay my respects to Denis Freney, the third co-convenor of the group that Meredith and I were leading here in Sydney: the Anti-Apartheid Movement. There was another very important Denis – Denis Brutus – a coloured South African who was a sportsman as well as a writer and academic. He was one of the strategic brains behind the sports' boycott. There was also a really important book by a man using the name John Lawrence, called *The Seeds of Disaster*. Brutus and Lawrence were two of the primary influences on me in trying to work out our tactics.

* Co-convenor of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and campaigner against the 1971 Springboks tour of Australia.

In Australia, absent friends include John Brink, Hazel Jones, Bob Pringle and Alice McGregor. Someone else who was not directly part of the organised anti-apartheid activities, but was incredibly influential upon me, was Peter Tobin, who was very involved in Aboriginal politics. And we cannot talk about the overall anti-apartheid movement without mentioning the incredible contributions of Sekai and Jim Holland, of Dick Buckhorn who couldn't make it here from Brisbane, and of the seven Wallabies.

I want to try to offer a broad context. I think there have been three waves of struggle for justice in the twentieth century. The first wave of struggle for social change culminated around World War I, the Bolshevik counter-revolution in the Soviet Union, and the Spanish Civil War/revolution. What happened was the failure/defeat of movements for social change that were primarily movements around class, although there was also the feminist movement that – like the working-class movement – was co-opted, via the false-consciousness of nationalism, into World War I. Fascism was the result of the failure of these movements, and then fascism was itself defeated in World War II.

The second wave of the twentieth century comes via the independence movements in the Third World. This new, global wave – of struggle around colonialism and race – gets going after World War II. I believe that the New Left and the movements we were part of, were a response in the First World to the movements for self-determination in the Third World. We were part of that second wave and I think we were certainly influential – both for our support for these independence movements, but also for changing our own societies. We brought about significant reforms, but to a large extent we – not unlike the independence movements – have been co-opted within the dominant hegemonic, increasingly global, capitalist system. As the twentieth century ended we are witnessing the development of another, third wave, of increasingly global struggles, the so-called anti-globalisation movement.

What was so special about the second wave was that a diversity of movements came to explore mutual integration. Movements around ecology and race had not been prominent in the first wave, in the early part of the twentieth century, and the movements of that time lacked integration. Here I would mention a book called *Four Dimensional Social Space* [edited by T. Jagtenberg and P. D'Alton, 1989]. Its idea is that there are four main dimensions that make up our social lives – class, ethnicity and race, gender, and ecology or species. I think that these second wave movements that we are considering basically attempted to see how life is complementary in its diversity and that human liberation is not just an utopian idea. I believe our movements showed the possibilities for integrating these dimensions of human potential.

Turning now to some thoughts on the anti-apartheid movement. It seems to me from my experiences in Sydney that the origins of the movement lay with several sources, including forces of the first wave like left-wing unions and a variety of activists – many influenced by the second wave. Someone like Denis Freney was very important organisationally, while there were others, such as Dick Buckhorn, who were like a one-person movement. Then we had activists who were exiles from Africa, people like Hazel Jones who had lived in Kenya and who organised a group called Friends of Africa. And John and Margaret Brink who came from South Africa and established the South Africa Defence and Aid Fund (SADAF).

Then there were the Magnificent Seven – Jim Boyce, Anthony Abrahams, Terry Forman, Paul Darveniza, Jim Roxborough, Bruce Taafe and Barry McDonald. Having recently toured South Africa playing rugby, these sportsmen were now publicly opposing any further contact with apartheid sport.

The broader context of our period of struggle was the anti-Vietnam war movement, which effectively challenged and got rid of the blind anti-communist ethos of the Menzies era. I believe the anti-Vietnam war movement precipitated the rise of feminism and the women's liberation movement, the indigenous and anti-racism movements and also the ecology movements.

The experience of many of us from the anti-Vietnam war events was that while we were successfully mobilising masses of people - that feeling of shutting down the city, that amazing feeling of power - we were not stopping the war. Many of us were feeling that peaceful protest was not enough. Even with the three Moratoriums of 1970, we were doing all we could but we were still not stopping the war. A lot of people were thinking, we have to go beyond peaceful protest. Civil disobedience and even sabotage were what we began to explore. Frustration in the emerging radical movements with the normal channels, spilled over into huge support for direct action and civil disobedience, against what everyone was perceiving as the moral evil of racism – the rationale of colonialism. Apartheid was the most blatant form of racism that existed. Racism in Australia was also appalling, but apartheid in South Africa seemed so clear-cut, in the way it was explicitly legislated.

Our anti-tour organisations were actually quite small. But we found we had become the catalyst for a decentralised, autonomous movement of spontaneous direct action. Certainly people like Denis Freney, Meredith Burgmann, John Myrtle, Sekai and Jim, Meg and John, Hazel, Bob Pringle, Dick Buckhorn and myself, played as prominent a role as we could. But the success of the anti-tour campaign lay in a combination of tactics. There were the fantastic nation-wide union black bans, for instance, forcing the Springboks to be transported around in military planes. There were the mass arrests for direct actions, revealing the number of people who were willing to get arrested. We also saw the authorities having to turn sports venues into fortified bunkers, culminating in the Queensland Government's declaration of a State of Emergency.

The immediate after-effects of the rugby tour included cancellation of that year's cricket tour and other sporting tours between Australia and (apartheid) South Africa. Most people would now consider that the world-wide sports boycott was a major factor, over time, in bringing apartheid down. The other immediate after-effect was the support for Aboriginal politics, with 1972 becoming the Year of the Indigenous Movement, bringing attention to the struggle for land rights, the Tent Embassy and so on.

But where did these movements go? I would suggest they were partly defused by the Whitlam Government, piggy-backing up on them and in effect co-opting them. There was also a lack of a comprehensive, coherent radical strategy, there were internal divisions amongst us, not enough attention to process but also not enough attention to building our alternatives. We could imagine these alternatives, but we were too caught

up in fighting the oppressive system and defending our gains. Substantive social change against powerful vested interests is certainly not easy. The history of the three waves indicates the pendulum-like swings of struggles for change.

JOHN MYRTLE*

To begin I would like to acknowledge people who were important in the anti-apartheid movement and certainly important personally in my life. Denis Freney, who had a quite unique organising ability, was one such person. He was a journalist working for *Tribune* at the time and I cannot remember which South African tour it was, whether it was the women basketballers or the surf lifesavers, but he phoned the organisation concerned and told a kind lady who was working in the office that he was a journalist interested to report on the forthcoming tour. So the kind person dictated the entire itinerary word-for-word, plus where the sporting tourists would be staying and what flights they were on. I don't need to tell you that the following week the whole itinerary was published in *Tribune*. There were many other aspects of Denis's career which were quite admirable and I just stood in awe of his energy, his passion and his organising ability.

I suppose the most important person for me was Hazel Jones, who was to become my mother-in-law. Hazel grew up in a very unusual background. She was born in Kenya to Australian parents who managed a coffee plantation there for 20 years. Hazel was so affected by the exploitation and racism that she witnessed during her childhood, that she became a life-long campaigner against racism and oppression.

I would also like to acknowledge two very special people, John and Margaret Brink. John died a few years ago but fortunately, Margaret is still with us. They were very influential people in my life. I first met John Brink in his bookshop, the Anchor Bookshop, 2 Bridge Street, Sydney, which was a haven in the 1960s and 1970s for people interested in racism and wanting to do something about it. Somebody told me about John Brink, so on a memorable day in February 1968 I made my way to the Anchor Bookshop and I can honestly say my life has not been the same since. He and a number of people in Sydney had formed what was then known as the South Africa Defence and Aid Fund (SADAF), which over time went through a couple of name changes and eventually became Community Aid Abroad, Southern Africa (CAASA). It was a very important group, essentially in raising awareness in Australia, and in Sydney in particular, against the policies of apartheid and the repressive policies of the South African Government.

John was always a good person for roping people in, and Peter McGregor and I both quickly joined SADAF. We soon realised that there were going to be great opportunities for campaigning against South Africa in the sporting field. One of the things about South Africans was that they loved cricket and rugby and they obviously saw that Australians were kith and kin and therefore, were the sort of people with whom they would like to play sport. I think the great majority of Australians agreed with that and

* Activist in Campaign Against Racism in Sport and campaigner against the 1971 Springboks tour.

were keen to keep company with the South Africans and their sporting teams. We saw the sporting campaigns as being a great way of making an impact and letting South Africans know just how repugnant their policies were.

It was in 1969, I think, that John persuaded us to set up a body separate from SADA, which we called the Campaign Against Racism in Sport (CARIS). There was quite a neat dichotomy with this set-up, because on the one hand we had what Meredith Burgmann called 'the relatively respectable CARIS', and the 'maddies' as she described the campaigners in the Anti-Apartheid Movement. It was a very effective dichotomy. On the one hand you had 'the respectable CARIS' roping in people from churches, from the Labor Party, from various sportsmen who were keen to speak out against apartheid, and we exploited all of these links.

Like Meredith I went to an Anglican school, so apparently the Anglicans must have done something right. I came from a middle-class background, went to boarding school for seven years and later taught in Catholic schools for some years. There were not many of us in that movement who knew very much about sport, or who were particularly keen about it. I remember that Meredith was interested in sport and Peter McGregor had been an under-16s Northern Suburbs tennis champion at some stage, so he was pretty handy with a tennis racquet. But most of the people in the movement would not have known one end of a football from the other. However, I was an exception. I had always been absolutely dead keen as an observer of sport, no matter which sport you were talking about. It helped to have some people who knew who was who and what was what in the different sporting organisations.

One of the features of our campaign at the time was that we were able to rope in some people from the churches, some unionists and other workers who were incredibly important, teachers, the clergy and so on. Depending on which background we came from, we were able to exploit people from these different backgrounds. For instance, a previous speaker today has mentioned the role of Alan Walker. Now at that time, in the sixties and seventies, Alan Walker was Superintendent of the Central Methodist Mission in Sydney. A really remarkable man, in terms of the impact he had speaking out on apartheid and on other social and political issues. Back when he was a young ordained minister, he and Bishop John Moyes of Armidale both campaigned very strongly against the 1951 anti-communism referendum. He was also active in the 1967 referendum that ended the constitutional discrimination against Aborigines.

So we had these people who were prepared to put their hand up and be supportive. We used them and they were really very effective. This was, if you like, the respectable side. We did leafletting, we undertook minor campaigns and stunts and things like that, mainly to attract the attention of the media more than anything else.

Another speaker has mentioned how important campaigns in other countries were on our local campaigns. I think we exploited the media very well in that way. In the anti-apartheid field, there had been some very effective campaigns against touring teams in Britain in 1969, which Peter Hain and others had organised. I think that the media were looking at us and thinking, I wonder if these things are going to happen in

Australia, and if they are going to happen here I wonder who is going to be organising them. We always had these people, particularly from the print media, contacting us and trying to find out what might be happening. So we were able to exploit these contacts in a very useful way.

I would like to wrap up what I am saying by mentioning something a little bit off the stream of this presentation. Professionally I am a librarian and I value the fact that I am speaking today at a Labour History seminar because history is very important in recording what is really amongst us now and is part of us now. I feel that it is very important for us all to think about the different political and social protest movements that we have been involved with and the sort of resources that we have collected in those campaigns. The material may be sitting in garages or in four-drawer filing cabinets at home, or wherever. Before we end up on a slab at Rookwood or croaking away in some hospital and saying, please drag out those files from the garage and take them to wherever, start thinking about those things now and do something about preserving them.

My mother-in-law, Hazel Jones, had been active in a number of groups, including being co-founder of Friends of Africa and secretary of Community Aid Abroad Southern Africa. When she died her children went through the things in her garage and found filing cabinets with important documents from Friends of Africa and from SADAF. I rang Jim Andrighetti, a good friend and an archives librarian at Mitchell Library in Sydney and told him about these documents. If any of you have been activists and have been secretaries or officials in NSW-based organisations, Jim Andrighetti would love to see you. He did great things in terms of cataloguing and preserving the papers from SADAF/CAASA and also from Friends of Africa, and the records for this material are now available for scholars, students and activists to consult at the Mitchell Library.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT: CHANGES, STRUGGLES AND GAINS

DIANE FIELDS*

In some ways it feels a bit odd to be speaking here as I suspect that the overview that you can get from hearing a range of participants in the events is more useful than an overview from somebody speaking from the outside. It seems a little odd to me because I was actually a participant even though a fairly peripheral one, just a person who went to lots of demonstrations and some organising committees, of almost all of the social movements being discussed at this Conference. But because I was at high school at the time I was not actually a participant in the trade union movement. Yet I think that the links between the trade union movement and the kind of social protests that have been dealt with here, are incredibly important. So I just want to say a few things about some of the issues and struggles that took place in this period.

We sometimes tend to think of the 1960s in a somewhat undifferentiated way, as being a period of seeming relative industrial stability. Yet in the early 1960s and mid 1960s, whilst the level of strikes was not quite as low as the level of strikes is today, in historical terms there were not particularly high levels of strikes. However, that all began to change in 1968. The number of days on strike in that year was 50 percent higher than the number in 1967. Almost all of that was accounted for by strikes in the metal industry, during a big campaign about the absorption of a wage increase into over-award payments. In 1968 not only were there 50 percent more strikes, but also \$100,000 worth of fines imposed by the Industrial Court on unions for striking.

I am going to be referring a couple of times to an academic commentator who is a person of no importance in many ways, but he wrote articles in the *Journal of Industrial Relations* about these things at the time, a man called A.E. Woodward, QC. In early 1969 he was commenting on the high level of strikes in 1968 and it is a bit like that famous thing that Andre Gorz said in France in early 1968 – I will never see revolutionary general strikes by workers ever again – a few months before May 1968 in Paris. Well on a small scale, A.E. Woodward is a bit like that, because he is saying, well we had this high level of strikes in 1968, but that is not going to be repeated in the current year unless, of course, there is some trouble about penal powers.

Then on May 15, 1969, Clarrie O'Shea from the Tramways Union in Victoria was gaoled for refusing to answer the questions of the Industrial Court Judge who tried him over the payment of fines by his union. On the day he was gaoled, he addressed 2000 workers at Festival Hall in Melbourne, who then marched part of the way to the court. People are probably aware of the identity of the Industrial Court Judge who

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did the dirty job – it was John Kerr. Kerr gaoled O'Shea for refusing to answer his questions about where all the union's money was so they could take it. By the next day, half a million workers were on strike and in the following days there were more strikes, huge demonstrations and so on nationally. In Sydney, for example, over 5000 people marched in defiance of the police on the afternoon of O'Shea's gaoling, shutting down city traffic for 45 minutes.

Another general feature of the period was the fact that the Arbitration Commission's authority was daily being undermined. Despite the illusion that we have centralised wage fixing in Australia, we did not have it in that period. In fact real wage fixing in Australia was incredibly decentralised in this period. Wage bargaining took place on the job, job by job, and the Commission's role, if it had a role at all, was to rubber-stamp what people had actually won by their own actions at work.

Commission decisions, such as the absorption decision in the metal trades, were defied and overturned. You can see it in one way just by looking at the way people got their wages. By the 1970s most people's wage rises each year came out of over-award bargaining, out of actually getting an increase out of their employer rather than from national wage increases handed down by the Commission. So the Commission was starting to feel a little bit on the outer.

The other thing to mention about the period is the growth of white collar unionism. In the mid 1960s about 30 percent of white collar workers were members of trade unions. By 1971 that figure had gone up to 41 percent and it was growing. I think one of the reasons for this is the expansion of white collar work, plus the fact that not only was the white collar workforce larger, it was increasingly made up of young workers. They were often the first in their families to enter into white collar work and they came from families where trade unionism had a good name, not a bad name. White collar workers in the past had often not had that background. Certainly by the early 1970s the white collar workforce was much more composed of young people from trade union backgrounds. In 1972, for example, bank workers banned the handling of all cheques, insurance clerks marched down Collins Street in Melbourne singing Solidarity Forever and calling on the few insurance clerks still at work to come out and join them on strike.

At the same time blue collar unions that had no tradition of militancy began to take industrial action for the first time. It might surprise people to learn that the Locomotive Enginemens' Union had its first strike in 1969, and was beaten to the first strike by the teachers and the bank workers who had their first strikes in 1968. The whole thing, I think, was incredibly infectious. Unions grew out of this militancy. Union after union that began to take industrial action found, as the insurance workers' union did, that their membership grew very rapidly.

Now the bosses were somewhat upset by all of this. Wages share of the national income went up over the late 1960s and early 1970s, while the profit share went down. Obviously this was not to their liking. Their concern was manifested in a range of concerns about law and order and here I will again quote A.E. Woodward QC. In an

article published in the *Journal of Industrial Relations* in 1970 about upsetting things that had been happening, he wrote: 'On a number of recent occasions unions have successfully defied the Arbitration Commission.' He was very upset about this, but while he might have worried about law and order, he was much less concerned about democracy. He didn't really see why full-time officials had to be elected at all and thought this was probably a bad thing in terms of keeping things under control.

He went on to say: 'One of the biggest dangers in union affairs today is a spread of so-called participatory democracy which means, in effect, rule by mass meetings. It is of course true that I've never attended a union meeting, but I have often been to other mass meetings.' This is his fear about mass meetings: 'Coherent argument is impossible, the demagogue is in his element and the organised vociferous minority can often carry the day and commit responsible leaders to irresponsible policies or courses of conduct.'

There was a real concern that rank and file union members were out of control of the responsible union leaders. Senator Ivor Greenwood, for instance, speaking in 1975, talked of the need to keep power and responsibility in the hands of top union officials, and not with rank and file unionists. Obviously, that was far too dangerous.

A series of explanations have been advanced about what was going on in the trade union movement at this time. A range of them do have elements of truth in them, although often they were advanced by idiots. The first studied the influence of communists – the 'Reds Under the Beds' kind of thing. I think there is a genuine element of truth in this, that if people did not have left-wing politics, if they actually were not committed to some kind of idea of fundamentally changing the world, then no amount of favourable economic situations or good bargaining positions and so on, would actually make much difference to the way the union acted.

Some of my own research about union campaigns for equal pay for women in this period, bears this out. Looking at a union like the Clerks' Union, for example, which had lots of women members and really right-wing, useless union leadership, did virtually nothing to get equal pay for women. In contrast, the Metal Workers' Union at the time had only 2 percent female membership at the beginning of their campaign for equal pay, but their women members were the first in Australia to get access to some of those equal pay decisions on the job. So I believe that the influence of communists did matter. If you had decent politics, you were likely to do better in these issues than if you had right-wing politics.

The economic conditions obviously made a difference in terms of the confidence people could feel about the likelihood of keeping their jobs if they acted in a militant manner. That played some role. There was also the changing nature of the workforce, including a younger workforce, particularly in the white collar area; more women, particularly more married women, were entering the workforce and adapting very readily to the traditions of militancy that they found around them. Those kinds of things obviously made a difference. But I think the most important thing was the success of militancy itself - that success fed on success, that people could see that collective action worked and they drew the lessons very easily.

The final explanation to put in at this time, is the idea of the signs of the times, the mood of the moment. As one writer has said: 'Permissiveness was in the air'. Maybe that is something we associate more with the New Left, the student movement and so on, but I think permissiveness being in the air was actually something that affected the trade union movement in terms of rejection of authoritarianism in all sorts of spheres. For example, the first National Workers' Control Conference, a rejection of authoritarianism or permissiveness in the air if you like, took place in Newcastle in April 1973 with over 400 delegates present from different unions and workplaces.

The final thing I want to say is that one cannot really make a distinction between the political and industrial activities of unions. I think this is always the case, but it was particularly the case in the decade from 1965 to 1975. In every session of this Conference people have been able to make the links between trade union activity and the broader social movements they were involved in. In the anti-apartheid movement, for instance, trade union activism and strike activity took place; there was the role played by various unions in supporting the Gurindji land rights strikers and so on. And in relation to the NSW Builders' Labourers' Federation and the Green Bans, that is a fantastic example of how those links have been made in the past and can continue to be made today.

PAUL TRUE*

In the brief time I have available, I am going to speak about the pre-history of the Green Bans, because Jack Munday is going to concentrate on the Green Bans themselves. I think the pre-history of that is interesting. For instance, when Jack first joined the Builders' Labourers' Federation (BLF) in the mid-1950s, if anyone had suggested what that union was going to become 15 years later, they would have been laughed at. Because for most of the 1940s and 1950s, the NSW BLF was an extremely conservative union. For instance, during the 40-hour week campaign of the late 1940s, about half of one issue of the Builders' Labourers' journal in 1947 was taken up with a list of companies that the 40-hour week did not apply to, which is a bit of a strange thing to emphasise during a campaign aimed at winning the 40-hour week.

But that was the nature of the BLF in those days. It was a bastion of the right wing and was run by a fellow named Fred Thomas who was basically a standover man. Then later on by another very colourful character called Jack Wishart, who was a disbarred lawyer, previously a leading Trotskyist, who had gone over to the right wing. His lieutenant was a former Mayor of Newtown and racehorse owner called Bill Bodkin. All of them were connected to the criminal element in Sydney. If anybody dared challenge the way that these characters ran the union, they were met with a common response, which was generally black-listing if you were lucky, and bashing if you were not. This happened even over the most innocent enquiries. I have been told about a young bloke who had asked Thomas about the funds of the union. Thomas invited him up to his office, locked the door and then proceeded to belt him around the office. That story

* New South Wales Projects Officer, Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU); author of *Rolling the Right* (1975) about the rank and file movement in the NSW Builders' Labourers' Federation during the 1960s.

was told to me, incidentally, by a right-winger, Santamaria's leading man in the BLF, not by a left-winger.

You get similar stories from all the people of that era. An activist of those times told me that even during the branch meetings it got so bad at certain points that they used to have to nominate beforehand who was going to be the speaker at the meeting, then they would sit blokes all around him so the heavies could not get in and give him a smack when he made a point that was not to the leadership's liking. Then, of course, there were the blacklistings, and Jack himself tells the story that in one year he had 17 jobs. That would not have been an uncommon experience amongst the activists of those times. So, to be an opposition element within the Builders' Labourers' Federation was not exactly an easy life.

There is not the time to go into this, but they were organised basically into rank and file groups, with the Communist Party playing a very good role in the background. Some of these people battled away for ten years before they were able to see any success with their struggles. In the 1961 union elections the left finally won control with a 22-year-old bloke called Mick McNamara becoming the Secretary. Imagine running the BLF at 22 years of age, but that was the case. Even then the situation was far from plain sailing. They basically inherited a moribund organisation. They had 9 pounds in the bank and 15,000 pounds worth of debt, all the office staff had quit and in the whole of NSW they had 29 shop stewards. That was what was left of the organisation. The entire union probably had about 2000-2500 members. In essence it was a small organisation that was basically in shambles. Yet ten years later, if you believe the press and the conservative forces in this country, the same organisation was almost single-handedly threatening to bring an end to law and order and civilisation as we knew it in NSW.

Over the whole of that next decade they were concentrating on the basic things – on wages, amenities, safety, union democracy, things like State-wide delegates conferences and so on. And with the growing radicalisation towards the end of the 1960s and particularly after the O'Shea gaoling in 1969, the union became what it has subsequently gained fame for. It is important to understand that because the Green Bans were such a wildfire experience, people may have the impression that it was an overnight sensation. However, it was very far from that. It was a lot of hard work and in some cases dangerous work, over a long period of time, from a lot of very dedicated individuals.

JACK MUNDEY*

Thirty years after the first Green Ban on Kelly's Bush and the Rocks, I think it is true to say that even though the union was vilified at the time, with NSW Premier Askin even introducing legislation to try to smash the union, the Green Bans and the Builders' Labourers in NSW are well and truly vindicated. Also, that their impact has gone far beyond the five or six years that were the highlights of that period.

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As Paul outlined, the union had been a very corrupt body. We fought to civilise the industry, to bring dignity to the workers, to fight for the right of women to work in an all male enclave, to fight for the right of gays, and to fight for the anti-apartheid cause. In fact the late Bob Pringle who was the union's President and left-wing Labor Party member, was the person who attempted to cut down the goal posts that caused a big part of the anti-apartheid struggle in 1971. So the union got involved in the new area of ecology because it had shown that it was interested in things beyond economism. We put forward that what is the use of winning higher wages and better conditions, if we live in cities devoid of parks and denuded of trees?

Based on this statement that the union was involved in wider political and social issues, a group of women from the fashionable suburb of Hunters Hill came to us to save the last remaining bushland on Parramatta River. Because of that unlikely alliance of the middle class, all women, who called themselves the 'Battlers for Kelly's Bush' and went down in front of the bulldozers, linking up with the rough-hewn Builders' Labourers, that was, of course, an interesting aspect that the press took up. In fact when the women came and spoke to the union, some of the Executive said, 'Jesus Christ, we haven't got one member of the Builders' Labourers in Hunters Hill, they couldn't afford to live there'. But as Bob Pringle and others argued, regardless of whether it is in Penrith or Green Valley or Woollahra, we should be consistent about open space, that is our policy and we should fight for it. So we acceded to their request.

This happened with all the Green Bans – they were never imposed willy-nilly by power drunk union leaders, as Askin called us. It always came from the people themselves coming to the union and then the union deciding to impose bans. After the first ban at Kelly's Bush, A.V. Jennings, the Melbourne-based developer, said he would use non-union labour to build the buildings and knock the bush down. But one of their jobs in North Sydney held a meeting and decided that if one blade of grass or one tree was touched at Kelly's Bush, that half-completed building would remain for ever a monument to Kelly's Bush. This led Askin to go off his brain and say, who do they think they are, they are mere labourers. Well it had the desired effect on A.V. Jennings anyway, because with that, Kelly's Bush remains there today, thirty years on, and will remain there for ever more. Because when the Wran Government came in they made sure that it will always remain open bushland.

That led to an avalanche of requests and, of course, most of you know the others – The Rocks, the working-class area of Woolloomooloo, the struggles in Victoria Street. Over that five years something like thirty-four Green Bans were imposed, always at the wish of resident action groups or environmentalists, or the National Trust. It coincided with the boom in the building industry. When I first entered the building industry, the height limit of buildings was 150 feet. In 1957 that was lifted and in the largest boom we have ever seen, which went virtually from 1959 to the oil crisis of 1973, the face of Sydney was changed for ever and some of its finest buildings were razed to the ground. So alliances were built with the National Trust to stop wholesale destruction of all the environment in our city and over sixty buildings are still standing in the city that owe their existence to the fact that the Green Bans supported the National Trust and saved them.

For example, the Minister at a Congregational Church, who wanted to destroy it, went to the Labor Council when Secretary Ralph Marsh was there. He asked Marsh and also Bob Hawke, whose father had been a Congregational Minister, to intervene. He said words to the effect that the Builders' Labourers are stopping us from knocking down this building, and here am I, a man of the cloth, wanting to build it and they have got atheists stopping the building from coming down. He sought the Labor Council's support and I might say that the Council felt that the union had no role to play, that it was going beyond the role of unions to become so involved.

That happened also with other unions. For example, within the building industry at the time, there was a fairly complicated political scene because it was just after Czechoslovakia and part of the Communist Party had broken away and formed a pro-Soviet party called the Socialist Party. Even before that, in the early 1960s, a pro-Chinese group around the Melbourne barrister, Ted Hill, had broken away and, of course, Gallagher was the leader of that Maoist group in Melbourne. So it was a pretty fiery old scene within the building industry itself. And the unity was really prevented from reaching its possibilities. I think had there been stronger unity between the building unions and they had all been involved in the Green Ban movement, it would have made an even greater impact.

Some of the groups on the left said the union was left-adventurist and going too far, others said that environmentalism is not a class issue, others were saying that the union was nothing but the 'darling of the trendies'. Yet at the same time there was a real debate, a controversy, raging in society. We received letters from people who were often right-wing Labor or even Liberals, saying normally we are against a left-wing union, particularly led by left-wing Labor and Communists, but we find ourselves on side with you. For example, when we refused to knock down three fig trees in the Botanic Gardens, the Chief of Staff of the *Sydney Morning Herald* told me that this had attracted more Letters to the Editor than any other issue that year, in 1972.

So there was this dichotomy where on the one hand, you had some of the conservative union leaders saying almost the same things as the developers; on the other hand, you had small-l liberals and in fact, some Liberal Party members, supporting the Green Ban action. So it was really a very controversial situation. It has been brilliantly documented by Verity and Meredith Burgmann in their epic book, *Green Bans, Red Union* [UNSW Press, 1998]. There is also a terrific documentary film covering that period called *Rocking The Foundations* [Directed by Pat Fiske, 1986], which has been shown all round Australia on hundreds of occasions.

Other issues also show up the impact. Peter Singer and Bob Brown in their book *The Greens* [Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1996], noted about Petra Kelly who came to Australia several times and was a great friend of the Builders' Labourers, that one of the main reasons she formed the German Green Party was the action here when she saw the working class linking up with the middle class and fighting around ecology action. Likewise, when Paul Ehrlich came here, he said that he considered the Green Ban movement and the amount of news it generated overseas, was the birth of urban environmentalism as distinct from nature conservation. Again, at the Sierra Club (in

America), the oldest conservation movement in the world, when I was there in 1978, that was their first ever meeting between trade unionists and conservationists, even though it had begun 100 years before.

I believe that the Green Ban movement has shown that the link between the enlightened middle class and the enlightened working class, is as valuable today as it was then; witness the successful imposition of a ban by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) on the proposal by MacDonalds to build an outlet in Centennial Park, and the fact that the Finger Wharf was saved by the CFMEU imposing a ban on it. Also, just recently, the CFMEU imposed a ban on the Maritime Services Board which led to Sydney Lord Mayor Sartor abandoning his ideas about knocking down the MSB building or altering it.

So I think that the possibilities are there for unions to broaden out and become involved. In Melbourne a group called the Earth Worker is arguing that work should be socially useful, that we should look at the energies we use and that we should be examining the end result of labour itself. These are all continuations of the Green Ban movement. If the trade union movement is going to have a real future, it must continue the community connection. Because if ecologically sustainable development is to become a reality, then it is obvious that the trade union movement must link up with the conservation movement, in order to bring that to reality.

The connections and actions of environmentalists and trade unionists will ensure that the ideals put forward in the Green Ban movement will continue into the future. Unless the union movement takes on this wider scope, it is hard to see it ever recovering the strong position it held in the 1960s and 1970s.

TOM McDONALD*

The period, 1965-75, was an exciting period because of the upsurge in militant radical activities. But also because so much of that activity was of a pro-active nature about changing the position of Australian workers for the better. The radical activity involved the student movement, the women's movement, peace activists, Aborigines, workers and various other groups.

I want to talk mainly about the wages struggle. In that period the strategy of the left-wing unions was to fight on two fronts – inside the Commission for wage increases, because that was the only way unions could get increases for all workers, and outside the Commission for over-award payments because of the inadequate nature of the wage increases awarded by the Commission. The other purpose of the struggle outside the Commission was to lift the market rate of wages and then to use that to justify a mass campaign on the Commission to lift award wages to reflect the market rate established by militant struggle.

The strategy was very successful, which is illustrated in some figures by Deery and

* State Secretary, New South Wales Building Workers' Industrial Union (BWIU) in the 1970s; leading member of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and from 1971, the Socialist Party of Australia (SPA).

Plowman in their book *Australian Industrial Relations* (1985), where they point out that over that decade the company profits as a share of GDP fell from the historic level of 15 percent to 11 percent. This indicates that there was a real redistribution of the Gross National Product in favour of workers, compared with what had been the historic situation.

The left set out to open up new wage frontiers, if I could use that term. Previously, from the Harvester days, the wages system had been a two-part system, with a basic wage and a margin of skill. The third area opened up within the award system was allowances and in the building industry we were very good at finding names and reasons why there should be an extra allowance paid in the industry. To give you an idea, we had a multi-storey allowance, a building industry allowance, zone allowances, fares and travelling allowances, follow-the-job allowances, licence allowances, special allowances, site allowances, tool allowances and so on. Put together they became quite a significant element in the wages system that flowed to all workers because they were inside the award system.

The strategy of the employer class was to use the penal provisions of the Arbitration Act to try to bludgeon unions into limiting the struggle around wages. The reflection of the intensification of that tactic is contained in the figures which show that officially there were 9 fines on unions in 1960, 77 in 1965 and 454 in 1968. The full effect of the penal powers went further than those fines, because unions had to avoid fines and the possibility of deregistration and bans and limited clauses being put into their awards, and on occasions had to order their members back to work.

The other aspect of the employers' strategy was to change the wages system and in 1967-68 the Arbitration Commission fundamentally adopted the employers' wages policies. One of their proposals was that the \$7.40 awarded to a fitter and similar relative increases to other workers, would not apply to any metal workers who received over-award payments. This was called the absorption principle. In January-February 1968 that led to 400 strikes in the metal industry and to two national stoppages. Within a matter of months that whole policy collapsed and it was a disaster for the Commission and for the employers.

Another aspect of the decision was that the metal trades increases would not flow on to other industries. Now, in the post-war period they had always flowed on to other industries. So when the Commission made that decision it aroused this powerful force called expectation. Everyone expected to get an increase and when they did not, disputes broke out in a whole range of industries. In the building industry it was the easiest strike to organise because the workers were taking action on their own initiative in many cases. Quickly the building industry employers offered us \$7.20 which we accepted on the basis that we could not ask workers to struggle for 20c a week. We were wrong. It was not the 20c that the workers were concerned about, it was a question of status. Often we see wages as *the* issue, when there are other issues. They were happy to be on the same margin as a fitter, but no way were they prepared to accept a lower margin which implied that they were an inferior trade. So struggles continued for seven months and finally the employers conceded and therefore that aspect of the Commission's policy failed, certainly in the short term.

In 1969 when Clarrie O'Shea was gaoled, the left unions organised a stoppage which involved about a million workers. Now I think they struck, not only because a union official had been gaoled, but mainly because they had experienced the regressive and oppressive nature of the penal powers. The effect of that struggle was to really paralyse the operation of the penal powers for quite a long period of time.

This new won industrial freedom for workers expressed itself in the building industry, for example, in remarkable gains being made in the first half of the 1970s, starting with 1968. These included payment for public holidays without a reduction in wages; full workers compensation where previously it had been only two-thirds of wages; long service leave for everyone in the industry where previously it virtually did not apply to anyone because of the nature of the industry; four weeks annual leave and three days annual leave loading; ten paid sick days without a reduction in wages; and a series of wage increases.

The workers compensation struggle, which was known as the Accident Pay struggle, started at the Opera House in April 1971 and within a fortnight, had spread to all CBD jobs. It then spread to a state-wide stoppage of building tradesmen throughout the state, who were joined by builders' labourers a few days later, so we then had a general strike in the building industry. At the end of the three weeks of that general strike the workers, under controversial circumstances, decided to return to work. The case came before the Commission the morning the workers were due to go back.

Just picture it – the Court full of workers to hear this very historic decision the Commission has to make. The employers seek to have the matter referred to a Full Bench – that was rejected. They seek to have it adjourned to prepare their case – that was rejected. There were no barristers there, no great volumes of legal precedents, no witnesses. The BWIU (Building Workers' Industrial Union) secretary, with about three sheets of notepaper, got up and made a speech based on really moral argument and the pressure of the rank and file on the Commission and indicated that the dispute could only finally be resolved if the Commission granted the claim. The employers responded and the case was all over within two hours. The Judge adjourned for lunch, came back and made his decision and granted the claim. When you look at the way in which that case was finalised, you can see the pressure the Commission was under because of those times and because of the general strike in the building industry.

This power of expectation expressed itself by building workers in other states saying, if they have it in NSW, we want it. It spread to all building workers, metal workers and other construction workers saying, if building workers have it, we want it. Then it spread to the factories and within a year or so, accident pay had virtually flowed to all other industries across Australia. Some years later governments legislated to provide for workers compensation payments to be increased to full award wages for workers off work on a compensatable injury. The struggle for workers compensation was one of many major advances for workers achieved by militant action during the decade, 1965-75.

JOE PALMADA*

I have been asked to traverse the experiences of the late 1960s-70s struggle to defeat the iniquitous penal provisions of the Arbitration Act that operated at that time, and particularly the key role played by the gaoling of Clarrie O'Shea of the Tramways Union of Victoria for his refusal to pay the sum of \$8000 in outstanding fines by the union. Now because I speak from the experience of the former Communist Party of Australia (CPA) and its involvement in the anti-penal powers campaign, I feel I must necessarily say something about the Communist Party's capacity and strategy in playing one of the leading roles in that struggle. By no means *the* leading role, but a very important role.

From the 1930s during the economic crisis, the CPA adopted a strategy of increasing its influence among the working class, particularly the trade union movement, by concentrating its political and organisational capacities into building working class organisation in the workplaces, through the creation of shop committees. This strategy fitted in with Marx's theory of the leading role of the working class for radical social change and the Communist Party's role in strengthening the organisation of the workers.

As a result of this largely successful campaign to build trade union organisation at grassroots level, Communist Party influence in the unions grew rapidly, with many communists being elected to leadership positions in a wide range of unions. In addition, uniquely to the Communist Party, it had its industrial branches, where three or more communists working in an industry or a factory formed branches which focused on the organisation of shop committees and other industrial or workplace issues.

In the post-Second World War period, up until the late 1960s and early 1970s and in a period of relative boom, workers and unions made very important economic gains. In order to offset the communist successes and assisted by the existing Cold War atmosphere, the extreme right wing of the labour movement organised the Industrial Groups in the 1950s. They used a similar strategy to the Communist Party in the workplaces to combat, and endeavour to destroy, the Party's influence. In this period the Industrial Groups had a deal of success.

By the late 1960s the penal powers of the Arbitration Act had been strengthened and were being invoked in every instance of workers' strike action. By 1969 hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines had been imposed on the unions and individual workers. It was proving to be a very expensive exercise by the unions to support industrial action by the workers or a factory, so that in many instances when Section 91 of the Arbitration Act was invoked, it was almost axiomatic that the union leadership would send the workers back to work. The frustration of the workers in this period was reaching explosive proportions.

At a National Committee meeting of the Communist Party in January 1969, the

* Industrial Organiser, Communist Party of Australia, 1960s-70s.

Party called for more militant action against the penal powers, citing the widening use of these powers against individual workers, such as eight boilermakers in Western Australia, all English migrant workers, who had refused to pay a fine imposed upon them. Their fine was paid by an anonymous donor. There was the case of the TAA employees in Sydney and other workers where, if they refused to pay their fines, they were being paid anonymously.

It should be said here that the CPA had suffered its first split by those who supported the Communist Party of China, who set up the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist). And in 1968, after the CPA openly criticised the Soviet Union for its invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia, we were on the eve of another split, with those supporting the CPSU forming the Socialist Party of Australia.

In March 1969, Clarrie O'Shea, secretary of the Victorian Tramways Union, refused to pay a \$2,400 fine imposed on the union's members. All told they owed \$8,100, which was a large amount in 1969. Clarrie, who was a member of the breakaway CPA (Marxist-Leninist), decided not to pay and to cop the time, if he was going to get it. He was immediately supported by 27 Victorian unions which had been expelled by the right-wing leadership of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, over a matter I won't go into. Bear in mind that in 1967 the Federal Government rushed new regulations through Federal Parliament allowing for the garnishee of industrial wages, individual wages, to pay fines. And in October 1967 some \$3,700 was seized from union funds. Clarrie was summoned to appear before the Court, he refused to give undertakings in relation to the money and he was gaoled.

At that time the government was not prepared for the explosion of action by workers after years of frustration. Dozens of unions indicated they would not pay any more fines. The expelled 27 Victorian unions declared their support for O'Shea and acted to defy the government in Court. The Labor Councils of Queensland, Townsville, Newcastle, Wollongong, South Australia and Western Australian, right across the board, pledged their support and called on all unions to refuse to pay any fines.

Clarrie was gaoled on Thursday, May 15, 1969, and on Friday 16th, over half a million workers across Australia stopped work in protest and attended many marches and rallies. By the end of May, well over one million workers, in a workforce that was much smaller than today, had protested against the penal powers. Clarrie was released after a week in gaol after his fine was anonymously paid. It is important to note that the white-collar workers came into the struggle – ACSPA which had 330,000 members at the time came in behind the blue-collar workers, as did the Council of Public Service Organisations which had about 110,000 members.

Following this great movement the Gorton Government agreed to meet the ACTU for talks. And while the existing penal powers were not completely abolished, they were modified and the Courts were very circumspect in how the remaining powers were used.

BARRIE UNSWORTH*

In opening these proceedings, Diane Fieldes gave an overview of the decade we are talking about, 1965-75, and pointed out that it commenced with relative stability. I think it is worth looking at the circumstances that we were confronted with at that time. In 1965 we had experienced 24 years of Labor government in NSW which commenced with the election of McKell in 1941. During that period, through negotiation between the trade unions and the Labor government, we had been able to establish by statute many of the conditions that underpinned the working conditions of workers in this state. And I would remind you that the standard hours were determined by statute and changed by Parliamentary enactments.

The Annual Holidays Act also provided the basis which underpinned awards relating to annual holidays. The Long Service Leave Act, which was introduced in 1955, provided long service leave for all workers in this state and, of course, we had the existence of the Workers' Compensation Act. Also, our awards were based on the basic wage, which again was determined by government and government regulation. So this was the environment that we set out with in that decade.

In looking back over this period, I believe it was an eventful decade because the circumstances that occurred certainly laid the foundations for events in the subsequent two decades. In May 1965 we saw the fall of the Renshaw Government and the election of Askin as Premier of NSW. Where previously we had experienced security of employment, particularly public employment such as the great workforce of the Railways, Public Works, in the electricity industry, the public sector, in public education, this employment was now threatened by the election of a conservative government. I must say, however, that even though we thought it was threatened then, we never envisaged how threatened it would be with the election of a subsequent conservative government in 1988. Because what Askin and his successors did was nothing compared with what Greiner did to the public sector in the years after 1988.

During the period of the Askin Government we found negotiations with public employers more difficult, but notwithstanding this we adopted techniques which ensured that we were able to advance the standards which employees in this state enjoyed and which provided a basis for workers in other states to follow. Through our negotiations with the Council of the City of Sydney and the electricity distribution authorities, we were able to introduce the four weeks leave. That was where it started, in the Council of the City of Sydney negotiations. The other issues that came to the fore were the leave loading, which was an additional payment to compensate workers for the loss of shift penalties and overtime payments when they went on leave, and the campaign for the 35-hour week, which took place in the second part of the decade.

The events of 1973 were quite dramatic, when electricity generation workers in this state in effect closed down the state by their withdrawal of labour and took control of the generation of electricity. These occurrences in that decade provided a basis of union

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organisation which was picked up in other industries. The descriptions by Jack and Tom of what was happening in the building industry, to some extent paralleled, or in other cases, followed what was happening in the industries I have referred to.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act had not then been introduced. It was only introduced as a result of enactments of the Wran Government after the decade under discussion. But dust diseases affecting workers working with asbestos had come to the fore, and the unions were conscious of the impact on workers as a result of working with asbestos. In addition, meat workers first encountered brucellosis or Q-fever. It was as a result of these occurrences that trade unions, and governments for that matter, subsequently took a much more serious note of issues affecting workers' health. They are the events that came out of the decade.

A fair amount has been said about negotiation of over-award payments, which were important because of the conservative nature of the Arbitration tribunals of the period. Now my view is a simple one – you get the decision out of Arbitration based on who you appoint to make that decision. In the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, we had been confronted with 24 years of conservative rule and appointments to the tribunals. Of course the same thing happened here in NSW during the Askin period – conservative governments appoint conservative judges and commissioners. It is only when you have a period of Labor administration that you open up appointments to the Arbitration tribunals and you make the tribunals more effective. Because they certainly were not effective when you had the conservative judges in the Commission doling out penalties under the provisions of the Arbitration Act. The great events of the late 1960s with the gaoling of Clarrie O'Shea certainly highlighted that point.

The national wage cases developed by the Australian Council of Trade Unions toward the end of the 1960s and into the 1970s, were important. And I think the appointment of Hawke as the ACTU's industrial officer was a great appointment, also the way in which the ACTU was able to coordinate the Federal unions, with the State Labor Councils, to campaign around arguments being put forward based on prices and productivity, which secured increases for workers which then subsequently flowed through. That was an interesting study in itself and something that was important in that decade.

In relation to the politics of the period, I think the election of the Whitlam Government and the two elections – the 1969 election in which Whitlam made great inroads and positioned himself to win in 1972, and then the successful 1972 election – certainly created feelings of expectation, which were realised with that government's election. With Clyde Cameron as the new Minister for Labour and Industry, with changes made to employment in the public sector, with the increase in salaries to workers in the Commonwealth public sector, this was a totally different environment to that which we had experienced in the previous 24 years. However, it did have its negative sides. There were two aspects to that Whitlam Government that I think we should think about.

The first was the 25 percent tariff cut which had a major impact on manufacturing industry in this state and of course, changed forever the strength of employment in the manufacturing industry. In 1965 unemployment in NSW would have been about 2

percent, but the changes that we made to the structure of employment have created a situation where today, there is very little discussion about the level of unemployment. Quite frankly, it is far too high for a civilised society. But these are the outcomes of government decision-making on this macro-economic level.

The other problem that we were confronted with, because all good things do come to an end, was inflation. I will take you back to 1974, when I think inflation was 17 percent. It was only with that experience that workers and the ACTU realised that we had to adopt a different view of wage adjustment and look at wider issues. That is why we set the basis for the Prices and Incomes Accord, which was a feature of the Hawke Government.

So I go back to the end of that decade, in 1975. It was a decade of union campaigning, it was a great period in terms of the strength of trade unionism, we had a membership of something like 56 percent, the Labor Council of NSW had its highest ever level of affiliated unions and represented well over a million workers in this state. And of course, at the end of the decade all good things came around again with the election of the Wran Government and another period of Labor administration in NSW, which then saw us build on those gains made by hard-won struggle in 1965 to 1975 which were incorporated in subsequent legislation.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONFLICT AND CHANGE IN THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY, 1965-72

SUE TRACEY*

(Session Chairperson)

During the years, 1965-72, issues like apartheid, Aboriginal land rights, the anti-Vietnam war movement and peace movement, the environment movement and Green Bans, all affected the ALP very much and a number of people were active, both in the Party and in these groups. But more importantly than the groups actually being there or the ALP being in them, was that those groups provided a wealth of information for the Party to fuel the campaigns that went on, around various issues. In fact, at that time we always used to say that the right did not have any ideology and that was possibly because it wasn't common currency and you didn't read it in the newspapers, it was not there as a handy reference. We noticed how that changed by the early 1980s when there had been a kind of collapse of so many of these left movements, including the Communist Party, as one of those that provided this never-ending store of information for debates.

Then we got that dominant right-wing ideology with economic rationalism and all the other things that have made our lives so awful. It is encouraging, however, that in the last few years the anti-globalisation movement and indeed, the environment movement, have been seen to be left movements which have been successful. This is a rather encouraging and hopeful development. Of all of these social protest movements of the 1960s, it is only the environment movement that has succeeded in forming a political party.

In order to implement their agendas, all these groups have to connect in some way with the political process and as they were generally regarded as left movements, it was only natural that it should be the Labor Party. Of course, the Labor Party was not always very quick to take these issues on board and it took a time for the Party to move to adopt an anti-Vietnam war position.

There were individuals within the Party who fought for many of those issues. One of those people who has been involved in supporting progressive causes in the Party for all those years is Bruce Childs, who has nearly 45 years membership of the Labor Party. In addition to being interested in the Party's ideology, Bruce was also very closely involved in the numbers manipulation in it and other critical things. Often you do not have time to read policy because you are too busy ensuring that the delegates are coming from a certain union or a certain something else for something to happen. There are people in the Labor Party who never read anything about ideology, they just absorb

* Longtime ALP member in Sydney; currently a member of the New South Wales ALP Administrative Committee and convenor of the NSW ALP's History Group.

it by some sort of osmosis and they know what the right position should be, but they are not involved in developing the debate. However, Bruce has done that and since he retired from the Senate, he has continued to have a passionate interest in progressive issues and is also involved with the Evatt Foundation.

BRUCE CHILDS*

The seven years that we are looking at were a period of great change for the Labor Party and they were all for the better. Although we are looking from a NSW perspective, it is still worth noting that the period, 1965-72, saw the ALP move from a State-based organisation to a National one, although to this day the right in NSW in Sussex Street still only see the view out of Sussex Street. I will argue that there were two distinct phases – 1965-68 then 1969-72. I think that is a convenient way of looking at the two phases of that period.

In 1965 I was Secretary of the Amalgamated Printing Trades Union. At the State ALP Conference, 73 percent of the delegates were trade union delegates. Federal Labor was dominated by State attitudes and State voting, bloc votes, on the National Executive and the National Conference. I mention this because we are all inclined after the battle 35 years on, to tend to forget the rather bitter and monoculture nature of the Labor Party starting, say, in 1965. The over-arching issue of the time was the Cold War and its manifestations. And with the manifestation of Vietnam, you had mixed in a decade of bitterness arising directly from the split.

There may have been rivalry between Dr Mannix in Victoria and Cardinal Gilroy in Sydney, but the big difference was that the Groupers had substantially left the ALP in Victoria, but in NSW they substantially stayed in. That meant that Victoria led the anti-Grouper cause dominated by the group there called the 26 unions, which were centred in the Melbourne Trades Hall Council, influenced by many revolutionary and other ideas, but also with a very strong Protestant or Masonic bias.

In NSW there was a moderate Catholic dominated State government of long standing, where power was shared between the Government, the ALP office and the Labor Council of NSW. One of the best operators I ever saw, Jim Kenny, was correctly nominated as an honorary Minister in the Government without portfolio, because he was the Mr Fixit of that government. That epoch came to a close in 1965 when that inept government lost office after 24 years. I remember very vividly that for two three-year agreements in a row, in 1961 and 1964, we sold railway workers out and in 1965 we could not get a single fettler to work for the Labor Party. We should remember that it is not railway workers now in every country town, but teachers and nurses.

At that time, as a result of that government's loss, there was a move to loosen the restraint on industrial action. That has been described here accurately, but there was an additional factor. When the State Labor Government fell and things could not be fixed up through the government apparatus, there was an increase in the industrial

* Secretary, New South Wales Branch, Amalgamated Printing Trades Union, 1965-71; became the first NSW ALP Assistant Secretary from the Left, elected at the 1971 State Conference and subsequently became a Federal Labor Senator.

approach. I am emphasising the industrial approach to point out that the Labor Party was a working class or trade union dominated party at that time. In my own industry the two print unions amalgamated in 1966 and we were able to organise the first industry-wide strike struggle in support of women and non-tradesmen. It was the first time that this had ever effectively happened. And in 1967 we had a general strike of 4000 workers in the newspaper industry which management was not expecting – it was a sign of that militancy.

Then, of course, in Victoria the climax of that industrial campaign was the Clarrie O'Shea dispute in 1969. I only wanted to add that whilst it is proper for all the revolutionary tendencies to claim credit for the challenging of the penal clauses, I would always argue from my own union's experience where we had a strong IWW-anarchist tradition, and that does not get enough expression. It was always my view that there was a strong feeling of taking a stand against injustice without taking it to a political conclusion, which I think was also reflected at this time in people challenging in some of the broader social protest movements.

So I am asserting that there was a strong working class culture in the Labor Party and at that time I think it would be fair to say that the right could be categorised as rigid, sectarian, narrow and male-dominated, while the left were just a little bit better. I will illustrate this point by describing the Victorian ALP left's attitude with an example from my own experience.

Moves were always being made to intervene in the Victorian ALP Branch, or rumours of intervention which often seemed the same, and we in the NSW left were always organising support for them. In Victoria 26 unions had run a ship that was so tight and autocratic that they were losing support. We sought a meeting and the state chauvinism was such that it took place in a motel on the border between the two states. The Victorian Branch was represented by three of its leaders, Albert McNolty, Don McSween and Bill Brown, while we were represented by Arthur Gietzelt, the late John Garland from the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU), and myself.

Our revolutionary proposal was that they should fill a vacancy for the position of Victorian branch treasurer, with Jim Cairns. The fact that Jim Cairns was the leading anti-Vietnam war campaigner in the whole of Australia and had eminence and appeal to a whole cross-section of people, unfortunately did not impress our colleagues very much. I remember that Bill Brown, who I think was Party president at the time, was the worst in his attitude to putting on someone who was not from the 26 unions group. Finally, after what seemed like many hours, they accepted it and Jim Cairns became the honorary treasurer of the Victorian branch and by virtue of that position, became a Party officer and so broadened that Victorian leadership.

If there were two people who stood out during this time, it was Whitlam and Cairns. I see Gough's role in the 1965-68 period as mainly negative. Without going into a blow by blow account of the struggle with Arthur Calwell and with the National Executive on Vietnam, I think it is fair to say from my perspective that Gough was a provocateur with his egotistical personality, able to justify a debilitating public debate when he could not get his own way and often against majority decisions.

The climax came when Brian Harradine was having a confrontation with the National Executive and Whitlam resigned as leader, proposing a National Conference to deal with the issue. Without going into all the issues, Jim Cairns ran against him and Gough won, 38-32. When you consider that a certain number of people would have voted for him because he was leader, then it was not an endorsement. I think from that moment, in fairness to Gough, he did change and got more of an attack of the humbles as far as I am concerned, that self-deprecating thing sort of took off from some time after that.

Informal discussions took place to try to bury the hatchet because of the 1969 election. For example, I know in NSW at the Labor Party Conference, on the basis of minimising conflict, we tried to make sure that we would not have the more ceremonial disputes that occur at Labor Party conferences. And I believe that in 1969 to '72, Gough concentrated on the issues that he had been proposing for some time – that emphasis on public: health, education, transport, sewerage, urban development. I do not mean to have an exhaustive list because in any examination of people entitled to be honoured for changing a system, then you have to put him into that category and he deserves it. And of course, it was that process of him working with the team of Ministers and others, that finally allowed us to win the 1972 election as a united group, having just missed out in 1969.

I believe the significance of Jim Cairns needs to be acknowledged because of his role in determining Labor's policy on Vietnam and the opposition to the war and taking that policy to the people. I chaired an anti-Vietnam war meeting in the old Trocadero in 1964 where Jim Cairns spoke and it was clear to me that he had the ability to appeal to a wide audience of people. He subsequently proved that right across Australia. His unique role was to pursue the issue within the Labor Party. He wrote the draft that was the basis of the Calwell position against the war and which was subsequently endorsed by the Labor Party and he also took the issue to the people in a mass way at countless meetings.

In 1965 Jim Cairns published his book, *Living With Asia*, which was really before its time because he challenged the simple racist model that we were so accustomed to, and remember we had just come out of the White Australia policy era. He posed things like raising the Asian living standards and things of that type, which did not conform in any way with the paradigm that was the accepted view of the world and particularly of Asia. What Cairns did was to unite across the class lines that existed and across the age lines and he also effectively encouraged women to come into the movement, because it was something that women clearly could identify with.

Jean Curthoys' book, *Feminist Amnesia* (1997), summarises very well the dynamics of that period and of the protest movements that have been referred to throughout this Conference. Although she was only looking at Women's Liberation, she showed the ideas that had been developed from national liberation movements, the black movement, the women's liberation and gay movements, and it was that question of liberation theory using psychology and politics and challenging power. What I saw her doing too in that analysis is to use Marxist experience, Christian experience and other philosophies, to

show how those movements brought us all together. It was that bringing together that I think Cairns particularly allowed in the Labor Party, for us to have that mix between the trade unions, the students and the middle class people who, up until that time, were not particularly encouraged in the Labor Party.

What I am trying to convey is that we had a movement coming together and changing, but it was not very simple, because jumping to 1970, the left Executive in NSW was deadlocked. There were those of us who argued that this movement of young people should come into the Labor Party structures and the left should alter its structures so that the protest movements could be reflected. Yet we had opposition from an equal number of trade unions. We were deadlocked, because those unions who had the tradition of democratic centralist models, if I could put it that way, were not prepared to yield up power.

To put it very briefly, in 1971 there was an intervention in Victoria and that caused the change of introducing a fixed 60-40 ratio between unions and branch representatives, proportional representation. More importantly, and without going through that struggle itself, it became a catalyst for change to allow all those people to take their place in the Party.

The 1971 National Conference of the Labor Party adopted a whole raft of programs that reflected the changes that had been fought for, often in inevitably close votes but in a reasonable atmosphere. That was the program and policy that was taken through to the 1972 election.

GRAHAM FREUDENBERG*

As Billy McMahon said at the White House in 1972 - let me quote a few well-known words:

We believe that America must not be humiliated. That when the drums beat and the trumpets sound, the voice of reason can be heard in the land only with difficulty. I offer you the probability that you will be traduced, that your motives will be misrepresented, that your patriotism will be impugned, that your courage will be called into question. But I also offer you the sure and certain knowledge that we will be vindicated.

The quote, of course, is from Arthur Calwell's speech in the House of Representatives on May 4, 1965, announcing the Labor Party's opposition to the commitment of 800 combat troops to Vietnam, the first of 50,000. On that night Menzies responded:

I recognise the somewhat pathetic note in the Honourable Member's speech, when he turned to his own people and said, metaphorically and literally, we will be unpopular but we will stick to it, you must remember that we are willing to suffer in an unpopular cause.

* Was Gough Whitlam's biographer and speech-writer, and press secretary to Arthur Calwell, Gough Whitlam, Bob Hawke and Neville Wran.

Menzies went on: "All I can say, if I might end on a horribly political note, it is a good thing occasionally to be in a big majority."

Those quotes are as good as any to sum up the whole nature of Australia's Vietnam war. For Labor, the central dilemma was always, how to oppose the war but support the United States, or at the very least, how to denounce the war without denouncing the United States - a dilemma never solved, because it was ultimately insoluble. For the Coalition, from Menzies in 1965 to Fraser in 1975, it was always the case of how to exploit and maximise Australian majority support for the war, and they invariably succeeded, not just in the electoral cataclysm of 1966.

But Vietnam, taking the word to define a whole set of Australian attitudes and anxieties, was still working for the Coalition in 1969, our great lost opportunity, and at least residually, in 1972. And even in April 1975 when America's humiliation and defeat became complete with the fall of Saigon, that humiliation that Calwell had predicted exactly 10 years before.

In 1975 the so-called Vietnam cables affair led the *Sydney Morning Herald* to call upon Fraser to use any means to get rid of the Whitlam Government. In effect they wrote the scenario, in April, for the dismissal in November. In a very real sense the Whitlam Government was the last casualty of the Vietnam war. Some people seem to resent Bob Carr's recalling last month [August 2001] that the Australian electorate had clearly and consistently supported Australia's involvement to the end. Like it or not, it is the fact. The American alliance and the electoral impact of Vietnam were the two factors which shaped Australia's response on both sides. This meant among other things, the Labor Party and the anti-war movement were never fully aligned. Our agendas were not always compatible and in key respects, hostile.

As Bruce rightly pointed out, Jim Cairns's position of leadership in both the Parliamentary party and the Moratorium movement, exercised enormous influence. He was a tremendous force for moderation and rational opposition to the war. This meant, in turn, that opposition to the war was never of itself a serious direct cause of division within the Party. I choose my words and meaning carefully. I recall that in the weekend between Menzies' announcement on April 29, 1965, and Calwell's reply on May 4, in preparing the speech, I consulted only two persons - Jim Cairns, who in fact provided the bulk of the argument, and John Menadue, who was Whitlam's private secretary when Gough was Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Menadue made only one amendment to the draft - we dropped a reference to our having reached the decision to oppose, only after prayerful consideration. John didn't think we should ask God to intervene. Jim expressed serious concern about the passages in the speech which accepted that North Vietnam was guilty of aggression against the South. His point was that it weakened the case that the war in Vietnam was essentially a civil war. In the event, Menzies homed in on those passages and made them the most effective part of his reply - at least to the extent that he deigned to make any reply at all beyond his grand simplifications, the downward thrust of China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the great lie of the request from the Government of South Vietnam, and the rest.

But to my point, that opposition to the war did not of itself divide the Party. I ask you to remember these things. The Federal Conference met at the Hellenic Club here in Sydney in June 1965. It adopted Calwell's speech in toto as Labor policy on Vietnam. However, the great issue of the 1965 Federal Conference was not Vietnam, but White Australia, with Calwell opposing. By this time after the 1962 debacle of the 36 Faceless Men, Labor Parliamentary leaders were allowed to speak but not vote at Federal Conference. At the 1965 Conference the Party dropped the White Australia plank from the platform.

Similarly in 1966 the divisive issue was not Vietnam, but State Aid for Catholic schools. It was the State Aid issue which led to Whitlam's near expulsion by the Federal Executive – the 12 Witless Men. The special Federal Conference at Surfers Paradise in June 1966 was wholly devoted to the State Aid question, which was the really divisive issue for the whole of my time with Calwell and Whitlam, until the Whitlam settlement of 1969 and Beazley Senior's Schools Commission legislation of 1973. That settlement ended the issue which had divided Australia for more than a century on a sectarian basis, until it was revived in a different, more sophisticated, more sinister form, by Howard and Kemp.

At the 1967 Federal Conference in Adelaide, the big issue was Party reform - Whitlam's successful effort to get the Parliamentary leadership fully represented at both Executive and Conference. The 1969 Federal Conference in Melbourne virtually rewrote the platform to embrace the entire Whitlam program – State Aid, not Vietnam, was again the divisive issue. Clyde Cameron's Presbyterian vehemence was almost too much even for Joe Chamberlain. Joe said, 'Listening to Clyde I could almost smell the faggots burning.' As Gough would say, the reference is pyrogenic, not homophobic. Chamberlain did successfully move a far tougher resolution on withdrawal of our troops from Vietnam, to begin immediately, than Whitlam wanted. And it was the timing, manner and method of withdrawal that was our major source of division within the Party as far as Vietnam was concerned.

In the 1969 policy speech, Whitlam announced the course we would take to explain our withdrawal to our allies – 'As Prime Minister, I shall go to Washington, and my deputy, Lance Barnard, will go to Saigon.' Well that, if you like, was one kind of division of labour over Vietnam. But for all the potential divisiveness of the withdrawal question, as distinct from opposition to our original involvement, it was neutralised politically after Nixon began his own withdrawal. Whatever else can be said about Nixon, he undermined the Liberals on Vietnam, just as he undermined them utterly over China in 1971.

In all the soul-searching after Vietnam, climaxing in the penitence of its chief architect, Robert McNamara, President Johnson's Defence Secretary – 'it was wrong, terribly wrong' - or Malcolm Fraser's – 'if I knew what I know now, I would have opposed it'; in all these post-mortems the reason why such particular passion motivated the protest movement, even before conscription gave it its special Australian edge, seems almost forgotten. It was, of course, the threat of nuclear war. The absurd triumphalism that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, with historians like Francis

Fukuyama writing about the end of history, contributed to that massive amnesia about what the world was really like in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s – it was a world always under the threat of nuclear war between the superpowers.

Calwell's speech of May 4, 1965 was one of the few actually to canvass this fundamental point. Humiliation for America, he said, could come in one of two ways – either by outright defeat, or by her becoming interminably bogged down in this awful morass of this war, as France was for 10 years. That situation would lead in turn to one of the two things – withdrawal through despair, or all-out war through despair. I remember to this day the giggles, sneers and sniggers from the Coalition benches at these ridiculous propositions and the lofty disdain and contempt on the face of Robert Gordon Menzies. As Calwell said, there is the real risk of a world nuclear war. But it was that threat, that ever-present threat, that lent such urgency and special passion to the anti-war movement.

Now, speaking as one who never marched, never sang 'No More White Australia' to the tune 'Michael Row the Boat Ashore', never rode a bus or slept in the Aboriginal embassy, one who has hardly written a line for over 40 years not intended to keep the Australian Labor Party entrenched and electable within the mainstream of the established Party system, I salute the protesters and dissenters. It is important, however, to remember how profoundly rational the great protest causes of our time essentially were. And even perhaps especially in the period of reactionary ascendancy I fear lies ahead, let us still proclaim, the power of reason.

SUZANNE JAMIESON*

My talk is going to be unashamedly parochial and not take in some of these big picture issues that Graham and Bruce have been talking about. My position was really quite different – I was just an ordinary rank and file person in the Labor Party and I cannot really start the story in 1965 because I was only 12 at the time. It is going to be a factional kind of talk. The other thing that influenced me when I was putting these few notes together is the concept of *Pentimento*. That is an artistic term, referring to how we paint over our memories, because you have made a mistake, you have changed your mind, you are going to put the hand here, or put the bowl of fruit there, whatever. I think that is what we do with our memories. So by and large I have not consulted my diaries for today, it is what I remember. And what I remember is sometimes not something that should fill us with self-congratulation.

I came to the Labor Party and finally joined it in the middle of my Higher School Certificate in 1972, bringing all kinds of very romantic ideas of what the Labor Party was. I had been filled with these fairy stories by my maternal grandmother who, until she died in 1983, was absolutely sure that Lang was right and never resiled from that position. Also by my mother, who remembered very clearly the dark days in 1941-42, living here in Sydney, who had raised John Curtin to the pantheon. From my father, I had a slightly more mixed bag. He was a minor activist in the Boilermakers' and

* Activist in NSW Young Labor from 1973 and subsequently in the ALP; currently lectures on industrial relations at the University of Sydney.

Blacksmiths' Society, where he mixed with a large number of very colourful communists and had been part of the anti-Grouper movement there inside that union. One of his particular friends was from the Federated Ironworkers' Association called Kevin McKeon, who many would remember as being Ernie Thornton's enforcer. They were the ones I wrote about eventually in my Masters thesis on how to rot a union election, they are still my model.

I won't talk about high school, except that it is interesting that Bob Carr still talks about how his history teacher at high school was so incredibly influential in the way he thought and the way he became an anti-Marxist. I would suggest that my history teacher was just as important in sending me the other way. Books that were very important to me at that time included Finn Crisp's biography of Ben Chifley and Bernadette Devlin's autobiography.

I first went to a Young Labor meeting in early 1973 when Joan Evatt had just been elected on behalf of the Steering Committee, which meant the end of right-wing rule in what Paul Keating still refers to as the Youth Council. So Joan had taken over and we called ourselves the radical leadership group. After that I actually served on three Young Labor committees under three presidents – Peter Crawford, who went on to become the member for Balmain, Pam Allen, who went on to become the Minister for the Environment until she upset the Premier, and Frank Hayes, who became an official of the Miscellaneous Workers' Union in Victoria.

Now, in thinking back and without looking at detailed diary notes, I do not remember that Young Labor really engaged with too many political issues, because quite frankly we were so busy campaigning, not only against ourselves inside the radical leadership group, but also against the right-wing group. We spent a vast amount of time on this campaigning, but also on getting the numbers and writing scurrilous propaganda about each other.

By the time I joined in 1973, Vietnam was all over in terms of debate inside the Labor Party, so that was not really an issue. We were particularly concerned though with what the Whitlam Government was doing. Other things we were concerned with were the mining of uranium and the propagation of various kinds of alternative energies. We were also concerned about anti-apartheid matters and about getting the British army out of northern Ireland. We were anti-Pol Pot to our great credit and we were pro-land rights, but we were not great activists in the way some of the social movements were.

However, I do remember protests in the early 1970s against the rapid rise of land prices in the Sydney basin. Young Labor activists would go to some of these land auctions and pretend to be young marrieds or to be engaged and deliberately force the price of the land up until they were erroneously found to be the buyer and then they would give a press conference to say, we are not going to pay and this is wrong and, of course, all hell was to be paid for that. That was one of the things we did. But by and large, apart from attacking each other and the right, I think we spent a lot of time drinking beer, or at least the boys did, and I have many memories of barbecues in people's backyards to raise money.

We held various camps every January, sometimes at the former Communist Party camp at Minto and also at Yarramundi, which I think belonged to one of the churches. I remember, it must have been January 1975, we were sitting in something that looked like the accommodation that has been provided for the boat people on Nauru, it was baking hot, about 39 degrees, and we were there to discuss the socialist objective, because my God, we were serious. We had invited the late John Baker from one of the postal unions to talk to us about that, but instead of speaking about the socialist objective, he gave us an hour and a half lecture on workers' self-management in Yugoslavia – very edifying!

I also remember another time after a meeting when we had adjourned to a small inner-city pub opposite the Mortuary Station at Chippendale and I was refused a drink. This was about 1974, it is within living memory, and I was standing there to get my lemon squash, but they just ignored me and there was no-one else at the bar and I could not understand this. Then Frank Hayes came up and said, 'No they won't serve sheilas here, it's alright, I'll get you a drink', and so he did.

Labor Women was established in 1905 and was abolished in 1986 and I want to compare the activism there with what we saw in Young Labor. Most unfortunately I was elected NSW Secretary of Labor Women in 1979 and the next two years proved to be probably the most unhappiest of my life. When I started as Secretary of Labor Women, I was working at the APTU (Amalgamated Printing Trades Union) before moving on to other trade union employment.

The great debate inside Labor Women at the time, or at least in our part of the left, was, feminism **OR** socialism? Looking back, we were too dopey to realise that you could be both at once. But the argument was put that you could not, you had to be one or the other, you had to choose sides, you had to be either a socialist or a feminist, and you could not be both. Many of these faction fights inside the Steering Committee Women's Group were very personal and bitter and reflect no credit on any of us. When I was elected secretary a deal that had been done by the Steering Committee men on proportional representation broke down and a left-wing president was elected as well.

We were actually into issues there, this is a bit startling inside the Labor Party, but we were. One campaign we ran, very successfully, was concerning young girls and women in detention by the then so-called Child Welfare authorities, where it was routine for young women who were brought into custody for whatever reason, to be given a gynaecological examination. So we helped put a stop to that. We were into prison reform, energy policy and abortion reform. I remember a famous march we wanted to enter on abortion reform, a march down George Street one Saturday morning and to his eternal discredit, Leo Macleay, who was then the Party's assistant secretary, threatened me, as secretary of Labor Women, with the expulsion of everyone who marched in that particular protest. We got around it some way, we should have told him to get nicked and gone ahead, but we didn't. Such were the days.

I just want to make a few quick comparisons between activism as I saw it then in Young Labor and Labor Women. As I said, Labor Women was abolished, or eliminated, in

1986. Young Labor, of course, had been a nursery for people going into the unions and people going into Parliament. Labor Women, it seems to me, had a greater focus on policy development and the radicalisation of women inside the Party, just ordinary rank and file women, many of whom needed very little encouragement. Young Labor continues as the sandpit for the left and the right apparachiks, many more of whom these days seem to work for Labor politicians of the left or the right, while waiting for their own chance of running for Parliament.

Labor Women ended as a mass movement in 1986. At the same time that we have seen the decline of the other great social movements of the 1960s-70s, we have also seen the rise of the bureaucratisation and professionalisation of policy development within the Party and quite significantly, I think, the decline of input by the Labor Party branches.

RACE MATHEWS*

The backdrop to 1965-75 is really the events of 1954-55, and I too speak from a parochial perspective, but that of Victoria. Bob Santamaria is remembered overwhelmingly now for his anti-communist fervour. It is generally forgotten that in 1954-55 and the years leading up to the Labor Party split, much anxiety about the Santamaria Movement centred on two other aspects.

Firstly, because of the widespread belief that behind the facade of anti-communism, Santamaria was interested in achieving a domination of the Labor Party for the purpose of imposing through it on Australia, a social order based on Catholic social doctrine. Secondly, because the Industrial Groups which had been overwhelmingly conceptualised and driven by Santamaria had moved beyond their initial objective of removing communists from trade union office and had set about removing non-communists who they simply regarded as being insufficiently zealous in their anti-communism or, for other entirely extraneous reasons, unworthy to hold office. This was a source of widespread anxiety in trade union officials circles throughout Australia.

The second thing to remember about those years in the Victorian context is that when the Federal Conference met in Hobart, as the Victorian Executive of the day was effectively removed, the inheritors were not the left. When people look back they believe that it was the left who took over from the Movement in Victoria, but this was not the case. The people who took over in Victoria were a group with two primary motivations.

First, they were a group of union officials who had either themselves been removed from office, or had seen themselves as being in danger of being removed, by the Industrial Groups, or had seen colleagues removed from office of whom they thought highly, or to whom they were attached by strong bonds of comradeship. They had concluded that the only reason the Industrial Groups had been able to exercise such power, to behave in so draconian a manner, was because of the imprimatur which the Labor

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Party had given to the Groups and on whose interpretation the Groups had played so fast and loose.

The conclusion that those men drew (there were no women among them) was that never again would they allow that to happen, that it should be a primary objective that at all costs the Labor Party imprimatur would never again be given to any group operating in trade union affairs, nor would they or those with whom they felt affinity, be sent packing through the activities of bodies such as the Industrial Groups. Thus it was that the institution of the Unity Ticket, now also largely forgotten, came into operation as a mechanism for achieving that purpose.

In other words, the purpose of holding power in the Labor Party in Victoria for this dominant group after 1954-55, was not to achieve political office and through it, to implement policies of any kind, much less socialist or left policies. The purpose was to neutralise the Labor Party as a force in trade union affairs.

Second, this was a group dominated by the Masonic Lodge. This was a group who had been alarmed more than most, through the proselytising of the Lodge of which many of them were active and senior members, about the threat of the Santamaria organisation to Protestant Australia. The result was that they were extreme in their anti-Catholicism, determined to repeal the State Aid policies which the Party had adopted several years prior to the split, and see that the influence of Catholics was marginalised within the Labor Party in Victoria. This they did very effectively indeed. This is not to say that there was not a left in Victoria, there was, but it was subordinate to, and servile to, the ruling group in whose power all preselections and patronage for public office rested.

Lest it be thought that I bring something less than objectivity to these matters, let me quote an undoubted authority on them, Bob Hogg, who was assistant secretary in the years leading up to intervention in the Victorian Branch and to reconstruction in 1970. He then became convenor of the Socialist Left in Victoria and set about restoring this group's authority in Victoria. Later he embarked on the voyage which took him through the State Secretaryship, the Federal Secretaryship and ultimately, into the John Singleton organisation where he is at present. Writing in the immediate aftermath of reconstruction in 1970, in *Inside Labor*, the journal of the Socialist Left in Victoria, Bob had this to say: 'The right wing power group was removed, leaving a group in control in which the Masonic influence dominated.' He went on to say: 'The junta members were anti-socialist, anti-youth and anti-intellectual.' (The junta was the term normally used to describe the majority in the Executive).

I would add to that, they were also monumentally incompetent in organisational and institutional terms, an incompetence which crucially cost us the 1961 election in which Arthur Calwell so narrowly missed victory, as a result of our inability to make progress in Victoria. But most of all in that absolutely crucial watershed election of 1969, the loss in Victoria denied us as a Party the crucial three years from 1969 to 1972 when the Whitlam program could have been put into effect and social democracy could have been entrenched forever in this country, with the averting of all that we have now come to suffer in the name of economic rationalism, or as I would rather call it, economic fundamentalism.

We have paid a heavy price for our own inability to comprehend the realities of the situation in Victoria and for the identification of the left in other states with these pseudo-radical forces in Victoria which took over in 1954-55 and whose pseudo-radicalism enabled them to call on inappropriate left support which left them in control until reconstruction finally overtook them in 1970.

I look back with particular satisfaction on two episodes of my personal involvement. When reconstruction finally came in 1970, the opposition to the junta in Victoria had for all purposes been crushed. The spirit was finally knocked out of them by the Broken Hill meeting of the Federal Executive which failed to act against the Victoria junta. Dick McGarvie, who later became Governor of Victoria, resigned from the Party in despair, others dropped out of their branches, became inactive, the mood was one of desperate depression. It was against that backdrop that the change of mind on the part of Clyde Cameron catalysed the situation where the Executive moved within the space of weeks, from its failure to act in Broken Hill to its decision to act in Melbourne and means had to be found to regalanise the apathetic depressed membership of the Party in Victoria.

The Federal Executive was calling for evidence of dissent in Victoria and I forever look back with pleasure on the fact that out of Whitlam's office where I was then stationed, Richard Victor Hall and I organised the great petition which went to the Federal Executive, which was readily signed by more than 1000 members in Victoria over a few days. If it had been left to arise spontaneously, I believe it would never have occurred, because of the demoralisation which had been created in the state.

Then when reconstruction had been decided upon by the Federal Executive the question became, could you get these people out of their homes, to take an active part again in the Party which had so conclusively demonstrated to them that it had no place for them? The Federal Executive had decided that there would be a great meeting called at the St Kilda Town Hall, where the Party members would be able to show by their presence, or not to show by their absence, that they cared. We created the Reconstruction Convening Committee, whose history as far as I know has never been written, although plenty of documentation on it exists. As a result, on that day, the St Kilda Town Hall was packed and people could not get in to cast their votes. The corner was turned that took us on to victory in 1972.

During the turbulent decade 1965-1975 a cultural revolution took place in Australia. The future was seeded with movements and ideas that changed Australian society and culture, and enlarged the space for democratic action. This book brings together the candid, at times vulnerable, recollections and reflections on that period of 39 participants in the events of the decade. The focus is on Sydney/New South Wales; much that is new is added to the public record.

ISBN 0 909944 09 1.

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ISBN 0-909944-09-1

